

Farden Ha'



Joanna E. Wood



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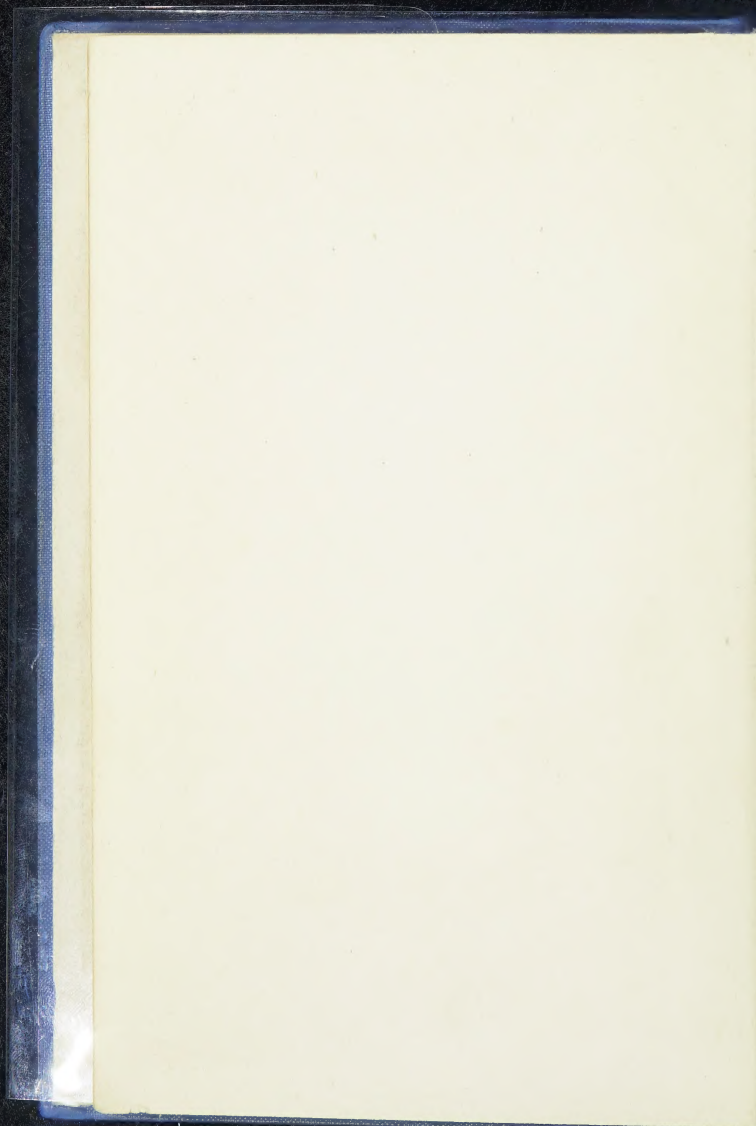
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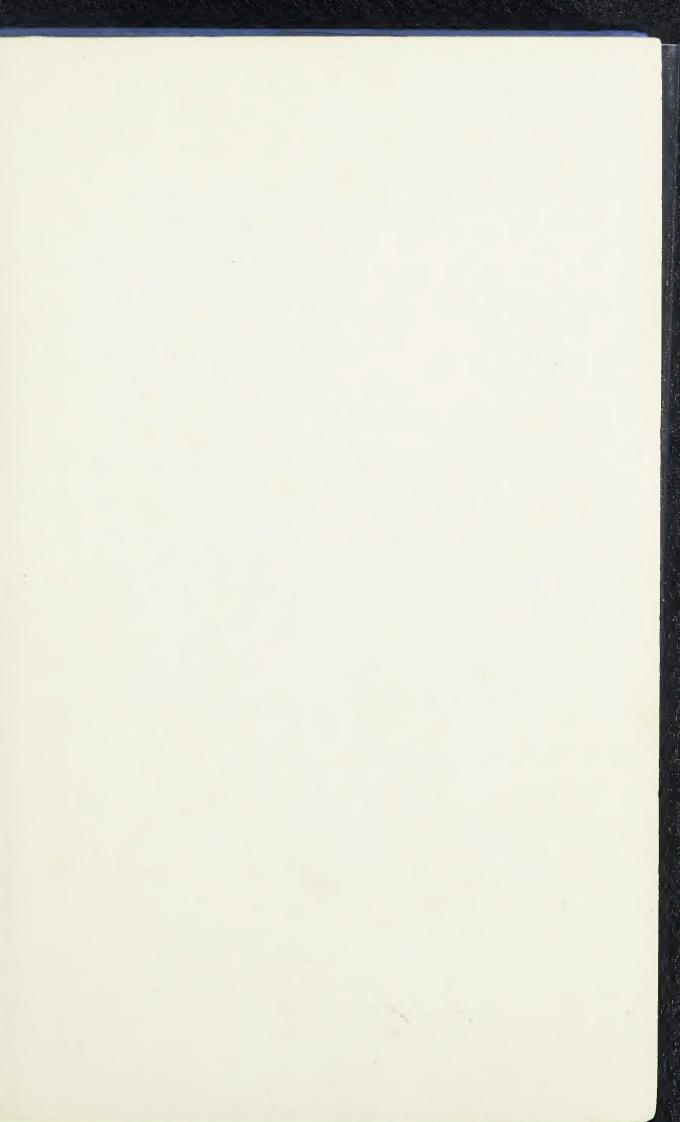
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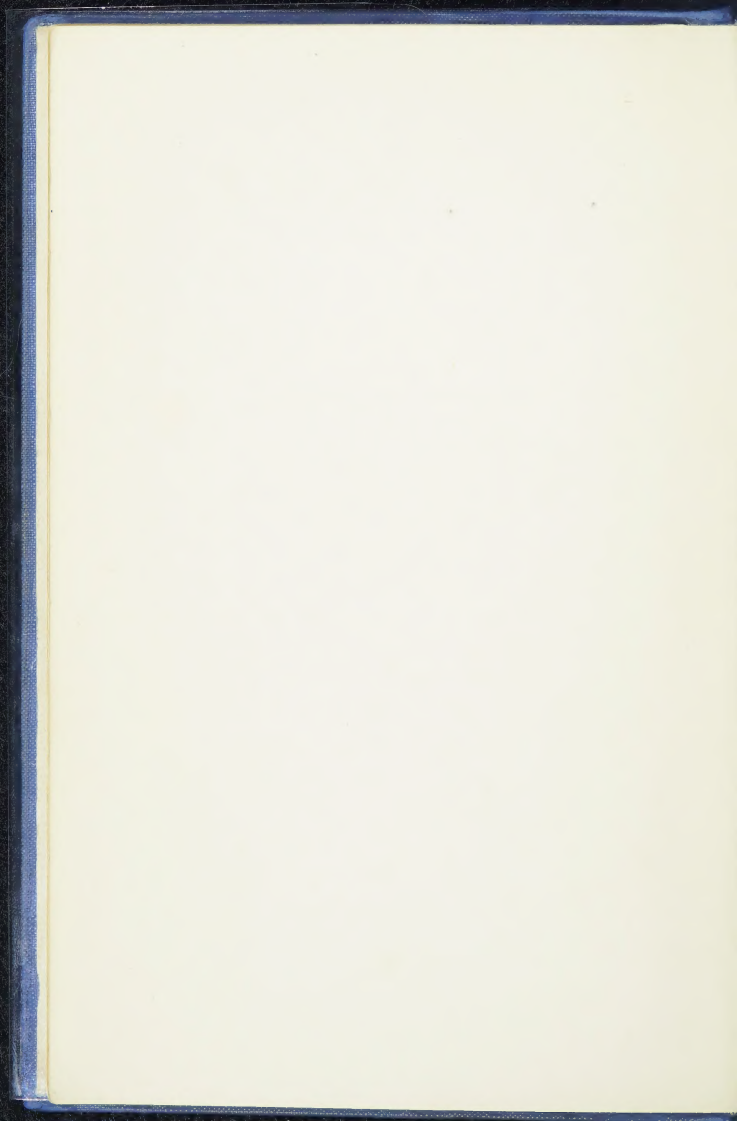
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FARDEN HA'

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Farden Ha'

BY

JOANNA E. WOOD

AUTHOR OF

"A DAUGHTER OF WITCHES," ETC.

"Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds."

—SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet CXVI.

LONDON

HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED

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1902

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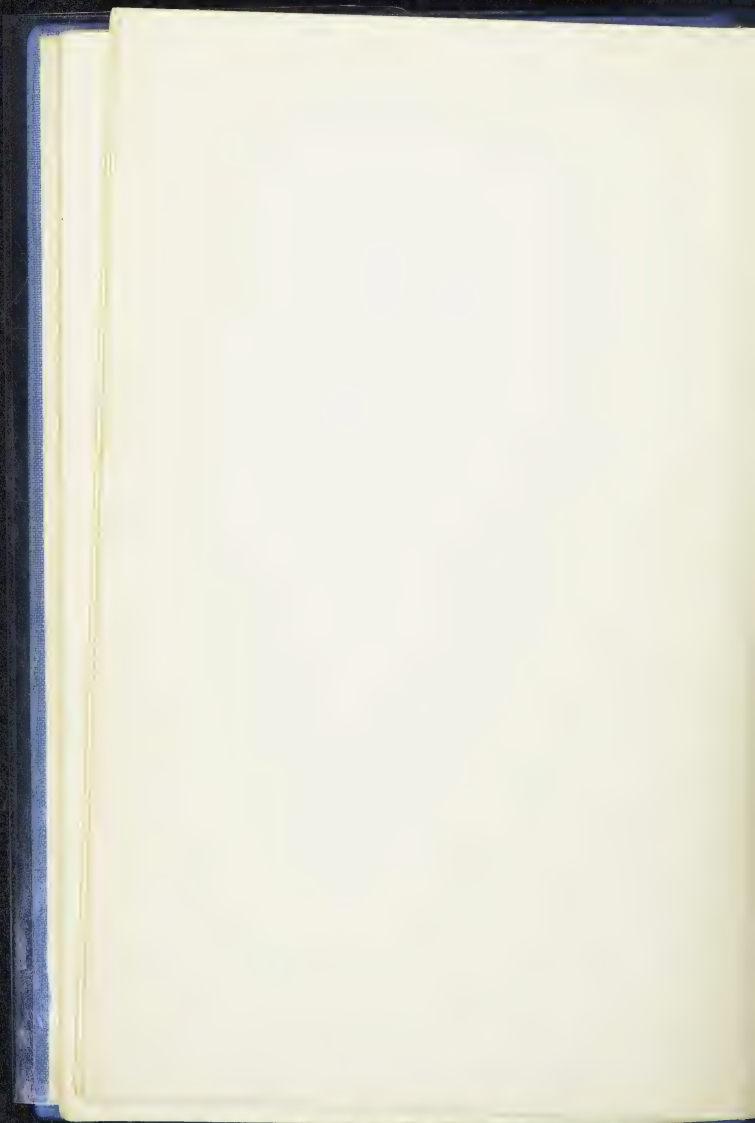


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TO MY BROTHER,
WILLIAM WOOD,

I OFFER THIS STORY OF THE GRAND OLD LAND
WE BOTH LOVE SO WELL.

JOANNA E. WOOD.



FARDEN HA'.



CHAPTER I.

THE little Scotch village of Trailfit lay placid in the sun. Its bustle came at night, or early morning, when the miners returned from, or went to, their work—for Trailfit was a mining village.

From the open windows of the little school-house came the sound of the children's voices as they shouted out the alphabet in unison. The sound was typical of the honest oblation even the poorest Scotch folk offer upon the altar of learning, for a voice from nearly every home in the hamlet was woven into that shout; only Tam Jamphraes' eldest son had played truant, and was deep in the mysteries of the Bog-end plantation, industriously trying to catch a snail by its horns and throw it over his head. Tam's father was notoriously "fond o' siller"—(it was he who asked a "luck-penny" on his bargain when he bought his mother's coffin)—so, perhaps, Heredity, which is the under-study of Destiny, and steps in when an individual is too humble for Fate to trouble with, had something to

do with young Tam's eagerness to catch these elusive horns; everyone knows that a pot of gold is to be found by digging where the snail thus thrown alights—but few there be who find it.

The afternoon sun waned a little, and the school was dismissed, the children poured forth helter-skelter. The leaders of the throng paused a moment to get their bearings, then, espying an itinerant vendor of crockery walking up the street beside his diminutive donkey, took after the pair as fast as their sturdy legs could carry them. Tam Jamphraes, lurking behind a dyke, slipped over and joined the throng; it was better, he felt, to meet the reward of one who loiters on his way home from school than to be answerable for the greater crime of truancy; it is not every one who knows enough to choose the lesser evil. As he slipped over the dyke he encountered Haggis Sandy. Tam tripped him up for sheer lightness of heart, and raced after his fellows, rejoicing aloud with the pure pagan delight of his own mischief. The mendicant gathered himself together, expressing his views volubly upon "callants" in general, and Tam Jamphraes in particular; he had just reached the peroration of his discourse when a belated boy went by like a hound on the traces of the others. Sandy paused in his eloquence to reach for him with his stick, the boy swerved, made a derisive grimace, and leaped away. Sandy balanced wildly back and forth to re-establish his imperilled equilibrium, and proceeded upon his way with his injuries unavenged. The miners' wives having "redd" up their houses came to sit at the doors and knit or nurse their babies; by some of the

windows tambour workers were seated busy above their frames; two energetic dames were exchanging left-handed compliments leaning out of windows upon opposite sides of the street; there was not much ill-nature in their controversy, though the language was, to say the least, vigorous. It was always exhilarating to Trailfit women to air their vituperative talents—they were known for their eloquence throughout the country side—"Trailfit randies" their rivals called them.

"Ma certes! Ye're up in the buckle noo, Bess!" called one of them sneeringly to a girl who passed in a gay gown. The girl flushed, tossed her head, and went on silently; having failed to provoke a new antagonist, the woman returned to the old charge with ardour.

The rooks were flying heavily home to the rookery in Bog-end wood, and the setting sun's oblique rays glinted from the topmost windows of Farden Ha', where the magpies, in a black cloud, were circling round and round the ivy-clad tower, where their nests were.

Farden Ha' was the high-light in every aspect of Trailfit; from no point could the village be viewed without the eye becoming focussed upon that fantastic structure; the shadow of its tower was perpetually projected athwart the retina of the village.

Architecturally Farden Ha' dominated even the kirk, its great tower destroying the effect of the slender spire among the trees. True the tower of Farden Ha' had no bells, but it had its magpies, and the magpies of Farden Ha' were the oracles of the village.

Like all oracles they were mysterious; the voices of the bells, their austere pæans, their simple threnodies, were easily translatable, but it required a great amount of eerie divination to tell what these dusky sibyls presaged. Strangely enough these winged soothsayers were never thought of in connection with happy events, but let a child be hurt, a man killed in the pits, a woman fall sick, and at once the village memory reverted to the magpies and recalled that their actions had been ominous; thus it was that above every coffin-head in Trailfit, by every sick-bed, in every hour of woe, there seemed to be heard the rustle of malevolent wings; there seemed to be seen the shadow of a gloomy bird of ill-omen, whose sombre aspect was in no whit relieved by the lacing of white upon its wings; to Trailfit eyes this white had the dreary significance of the white-muslin "weepers" which the men wore on the sleeves of their "blacks" when they went forth to bury their dead.

The sun sank till only its last reflections lighted the sky beyond the Bog-end plantings. The street was populous with children, buzzing with the hum of women's voices, across which the accents of the two quarrelsome dames struck stridently. Their quarrel was no longer a mere vehicle for rhetorical display, they had left the windows and stood, arms akimbo, in their respective doorways, busily engaged in relating each other's family history. When an argument between Trailfit women reached the stage where unflattering references were made to the forbears of the disputants, it was time for interference—an epithet addressed to oneself permits of pungent

retort, but an aspersion upon the character of one's grandmother is not to be borne.

The men, characteristically posed, miner fashion, with their knees drawn up and their backs against the sides of the houses, began to betray a languid interest in the argument.

"Isobel's in fine fettle the nicht!" said Bob Pait to Andrew Fairservice.

"Ay! But I'm thinking Mag 'll uphaud wi' her for a while yet, man! She has an awfu' tongue that yin!"

"She has that," agreed Pait. "I'm thinking Tam uses his breath mair tae cool his broth than tae speak in his ain hoose!"

"I doot it!" said Fairservice (which meant, Scotch fashion, that he was sure of it). "Weemen is gey fashious whiles."

"Whiles!" echoed Pait, who was a cynic; "Div' ye say '*Whiles*'? Faith! For ma pairt——" He broke off abruptly, "Wha's yon?"

A sudden stillness seemed for a moment to fall upon the noisy street, such as greeted the hooded figures of the Fates when they appeared upon the antique stage.

The men took their pipes from their lips, the tambour workers straightened their backs and looked forth from the windows, the knitting women stopped the thread over rigid forefingers, the children paused in their play, the voices of the quarrelling dames died down, as for the first time Harald Bowman entered Trailfit. He came with the on-coming night, so dark and swarthy was he that he seemed one of its children.

"It'll be the new manager," each one said to his neighbour, and the spell of silence was broken.

"A weel set-up chap, he is," said Fairservice, drawing hard at his short clay pipe, which was in a state of suspended animation.

"He's black enough, if that's ony merit," said Pait, who was disposed to be cynical about colliery managers as well as women.

"He's the mair like his work then," said Fairservice.

"What's that he's saying?"

"He's asking his road tae Farden Ha', belike."

"'Ods! He maun be a fool!" said Mrs. Fairservice, behind them. She had come to the door to get a better view of the newcomer, the ends of tambouring cotton stuck to her frock, her eyes were weary, there were irritable lines about her fretful mouth, her husband had good reason to know women were "fashious" at times.

"He maun be a fool!" she repeated with decisive emphasis. "And it staring him fair in the face!"

"He'll no ken Marriotte's Castle yet," said a woman near by, with a disagreeable laugh.

"Show me the way to David Hamilton's house, please?" said Harald Bowman to young Maggie Jamphraes, where she stood by the pump. The other girls had fallen back with awkward giggles, as he advanced, but Maggie stood her ground, with the audacity of a woman newly conscious of the power of her sex.

"Gang doon the street till ye come tae the Wast, haud along the Lang-end raw till ye come tae Tod

Salmon's, then if ye airt ayont ye'll be at Farden Ha'."

"Where did you say it was?" asked Bowman.

"That's it wi' the pyots fleeing aboot it," said Maggie briefly, feeling it beyond her to sustain a conversation with one who apparently did not comprehend plain speech.

"Thanks," said Bowman, and passed Maggie's rich rustic beauty without a glance; an indifference Maggie did not forget.

As one always does who travels by landmark, Bowman instinctively took the shortest way to his destination. Maggie noted this, and said to the other girls as they drew back to their old point of vantage, "He's no dull at the uptak'"—inwardly she raged that he should have passed by indifferently charms which the grieve's son found "very good."

When he reached the corner of the short street where Farden Ha' stood, Bowman paused a moment, looking at the quaint structure before him; a caprice wrought out in old stones.

The evident inutility of its plan, the inconsequence of its doors and windows, the incoherence of its architecture, cast down the gauntlet to the sordid utilitarianism of the miners' rows. It was in the village, but certainly not of it. The old stones scorned the walls where the marks of the hewer's steel were yet visible, the storms and suns of hundreds of years had softened the angles of the tower of Farden Ha'. Enwrapped in its ivy, like a king in a frayed mantle, it regarded the village roof-trees impassively, but, alas! for all its dignity it had none of the *naïf* complacency of the village

thatch, instead it was replete with tragic despair and mute protest; such an expression as might be worn by a face which, once noble, had suffered terrible disfigurement. The tower of Farden Ha' was shamed by the incongruous structure which had been attached to it. It had all the pathos of deformity.

Harald Bowman, after his brief curious scrutiny, advanced to the threshold of Farden Ha'. The heavy door was half open, he reached forward and smote sharply upon the old oak—the next instant the door swung wide, and a man stood forth beneath the lintel.

Thus Harald Bowman and David Hamilton stood for the first time face to face. The one within the threshold, the other without—they looked into each other's eyes as Life and Death exchange looks across the portals of Eternity. The one seemed strong and sanguine, the other subtle and ominous; upon the unconscious countenance of each there was the strange shadow of predestination, as if ever since the making of man their several ways had been determined. We often see this but do not recognize it till too late, when we read the prophecy by the light of the accomplished fact. Who has not seen that presage plainly on the pictured faces of those who have died young? The signet which the Gods set on the brows of those they love, that dim-eyed Death may know them and gather them as he passes; and this is but one of many destinies writ on human brows, but we cannot decipher them, nor will till "to the universal human cry, the universal silence shall succeed"—then the dumb destinies shall be given speech.

In a certain district in Cornwall there is a legend which tells how some Spanish sailors, surviving the wreck of The Armada, reached the Cornish shore, and there, finding kindly hearts among the men, and loving ones among the women, rested, and to this day their descendants, with the dark rich colouring of their ancestors, have also something of the fire and grace and bravery which, long ago, won safety for the Spanish sailors. Harald Bowman was a Cornishman, and the "Spanish Grandfather" was a tradition carefully preserved in his family—certainly so far as appearance is evidence he justified the tale. He had the peculiarly pale skin and black hair which we, as Anglo-Saxons, persistently associate with the word "foreign." He was tall and slight, with that sheer lithe play of muscle and sinew which means trained strength; his intensely black hair encroached perhaps a thought too far upon his brow, the sinister meaning this might have given his face was negated by the frankness and geniality of his countenance, and the sensitive, sympathetic expression of the lower half of his face. His thin nostrils and curling lips showed at once the dreamer and the lover. In another age, in another land, he might have been a climber of rope ladders, but there was that in his square jaw and sombre eyes which told that though dressed in velvet he would have worn a dagger, and would have been ready to strike, and strike home, in defence of his love. His carriage was good. His manner had a half unconscious hint of masterfulness, the mien of a man who has lived among men mentally his inferiors.

David Hamilton was of the reddish fair Scotch type,

with hair more russet than red, and grey eyes clear as the brooks where the pebbles shine. He was known far and near as "big David Hamilton"; sprung from the Hamiltons and the Armstrongs, he had inherited the great size of the former with the notable strength of the latter, from which, tradition says, they got their name. In such "condition" was he that at fourteen stone he danced the sword dance without a quickened breath.

His face with its ruddy colouring and generous mouth indicated the passionate temperament of the man. Swift to anger, fleet to forgive one would have said; and yet beneath this there was something stronger, some hint of the heroic endurance of the Jacobites, some survival of the divine steadfastness of the Covenanters, some birthright of indomitable will, unflinching courage, heroic abnegation, breathed in with the blessed air of Scotland. In his eyes there lived a great eagerness, as of one who looks to attain something he has longed for inexpressibly; the look of a man whose guerdon is in sight but not yet won. Despite his miner's garb his personal environment was one of dignity. Bowman was distinctly conscious of this as they exchanged their first greeting. Hamilton was washing off the grime of the pit, the water glistened in drops upon his great chest as he bade Bowman enter. As Harald Bowman stepped across the threshold of Farden Ha' for the first time, a sharp chill thrilled through his veins, changing their warm flood to ice for an instant. That inexplicable tremor shook his heart which is said to be experienced when a foot treads upon the spot where one's grave is to be. Hamilton must have felt some reflex of

this weird sensation, for he shuddered a little as from cold, and hastened to dry himself upon the narrow towel which hung by the entry door.

At the moment too, Bowman heard a myriad of uncertain noises, a whirring of wings, a babel of shrill cries.

"What is that?" he asked.

"It's the pyots, they have taken fright at something," Hamilton answered unconcernedly.

The miners and their women had watched Bowman out of sight as he went on his way to Farden Ha'. They lost him as he turned into the narrow lane called The West, but they stood looking still towards the fantastic building which was his destination, when suddenly they saw the magpies fly out again from the ivy and wing wildly round and round the tower. The watching women caught their breaths and looked at each other with eyes widened by startled superstition.

"They're no canny thae birds!" said Jean Lindsay, one child in her arms, another tugging at her skirts.

"No! They're no!" agreed several of her neighbours in unison.

"It's maist oncommon curus!" said Pait, pushing his greasy miner's cap over his left eye and shaking his head deliberately, "it's maist oncommon curus! In a' the years I've kenned thae birds, and that's a gude wheen, I never kenned them disturb theirsels after settlin' for the nicht."

Old William Lindsay came up at the moment, and his daughter-in-law pointed out the disquieted birds to him.

"It's a warnin'," she said. "But wha tae?"

"A warnin'!" echoed old Lindsay contemptuously. "A warnin'! A weasel, mair like! Hech! Sorrows dinna come wi' warnin's! Was there ony warnin' think ye when David Hamilton took hame Marriotte Hogg tae Greenbraes? There's no pyots there tae act the oracle! Warnin'! Dirt Mill!!" with which polite expression of scepticism he betook himself indoors to his evening bowl of porridge. But this disregard of recognized facts was like a second ill omen, and was remembered long after as a thing of evil import.

"It's no wise-like o' your gudefaither tae jeer and gibe at sic a rate, Jean," said Mrs. Fairservice.

"He's fair fearsome!" said his daughter-in-law.

"I'm no ane that uphauks wi' a' the tales I hear," said Pait judiciously. "There's them wha havers without a stop on signs and warnin's and what not; but it's a kened fact that thae pyots is by ordnar. When Bob Wilson gaed awa tae the pit, the mornin' he was killed, nane o' us took thocht we'd never see him again. I mind weel—I met him at the turn o' the Wast, and I said till him that I thocht the frost wad haud, and he said he wadna wonder, and the next news I got (I mind Jamphraes tell 't me) wis that he wis deid. And I'm sure a' the raws minded afterwards that the pyots followed him oot the Wast maist tae the pit mooth that mornin'."

"They did that," said Mrs. Jamphraes, joining the main group. "And div' ye mind the oncarry they had the nicht Jamphraes' sister wis taen doon wi' the fever that feenished her?"

"And," said Mrs. Fairservice, taking up the parable,

"they gaed on like a wheen deevils the day Mysie's wean was drooned in the mill-lade, skirling through the air, like the evil speerits that they are! I wis rinning tae tell its faither when the thocht o' the pyots cam' ower me, and I wis nearly bye wi' it a' thegither." The men and women clustered together gave assenting nods, and watched with foreboding eyes the last magpie settle slowly upon the tower.

"I am sorry Marriotte is not at home," said David Hamilton as he led Bowman within. He used English words, but a little shyly, as one who is modestly conscious of an accomplishment; the construction of his phrases was, however, as distinctly Scotch as was the full-throated intonation with which he uttered them, the intonation which makes Lowland Scotch the kindest speech on earth, a speech of which even the vulgarities are void of offence.

"We were not looking for you till to-morrow, but your room was gotten ready yesterday, and, if you will be content with what Lizzie can give us for one night——?"

"I shall do very well indeed," said Bowman heartily. "Never trouble about me! I am not come I hope to make you uncomfortable."

"Everything will be made right when Marriotte comes," said Hamilton; something in his tone struck Bowman.

"'Marriotte'?" he said, thinking how quaint a name it was.

"My wife," said Hamilton. The word was spoken as Bowman had never heard it before; but Hamilton was saying:

"We are but a small household. Quiet in this great barn of a place as mice in a run. There are only Marriotte and me, little Davy, and Lizzie the serving-lass."

"Ah! Little Davy is your son, I suppose?"

Hamilton's lips tightened, a vein quivered upon his brow.

"No," he said, in his deep, strong voice. "No. He is a foundling boy who lives with us."

A red-armed, red-cheeked girl of about seventeen opened the door of the room and fled precipitately when she saw Bowman.

"That's Lizzie," said David. "The table will be ready, will you come in?" He preceded Bowman across the small entry-like room where they had been talking, and opened the door leading into the great living-room; a table set forth with coarse white cloth and homely fare made an oasis in the wide waste of floor.

David bade Bowman be seated, and calling to Lizzie, asked for an extra plate. Lizzie, almost purple from embarrassment, made the necessary additions, then retired stumbly, having, however, despite her bashfulness, found means of taking accurate note of Bowman's appearance and visible belongings, and whilst fumbling with the extra knife and plate calculated rapidly where, when, and how, she could best air her information.

So Harald Bowman and David Hamilton broke bread together for the first time alone.

When they rose from the table David summoned Lizzie by the simple method of shouting her name. His voice was not one attuned to indoor use; it had

been wont to carry his directions to his collie dog working the sheep on the other side of a valley; it rang through the great raftered room in eloquent testimony to the mighty chest from which it came. When Lizzie responded to the summons Bowman heard Hamilton ask where little Davy was, and why he had not come to the table.

"'Deed!" said Lizzie, speaking as one who has passed through deep waters, "'deed, he's just that contrary! When I tell't him the manager wis come, he gaed a girn like a scartin' cat, and vowed he wadna come in; and when I pit ma haund on him, tae fleech wi' him, he up wi' his fit—I'm marked wi' his boot!—and he gruppit the fiddle and up wi't intae the toor, and I'm thinking they'll no shake their feet tae his fiddling this nicht at the factor's!"

Hamilton made some reply inaudible to Bowman. Lizzie evidently demurred, for David, in the tone of one who repeats an order, said, "I'll take care of his upbringing, my lass, do you as you are bidden. See that the oat-cake and the milk are ready for him when he cares to take them." Lizzie retired, silenced, but with an inimitable suggestion of a limp in her gait, the only additional protest she dared make.

David looked after her, a slow smile gathering upon his face. Lizzie's affectation of lameness did not trouble him. No one enjoyed a fight more than Lizzie. When little Davy was in one of his melancholy brooding moods, she was wont to say herself that she "peaked and pined" for lack of exercise. Hamilton went up to Bowman where

he stood before one of the deep windows, looking out into the courtyard, for the room was on the side of a quadrangle.

"Would you not like to go to your room?" he asked.

Bowman put the question by. "I'm afraid I've disturbed at least one member of your household," he said.

David Hamilton's face softened into sympathy as he said, quietly, "Little Davy is very jealous of newcomers. He has no one but me, and when one has little, that little is very precious."

A moment's silence fell between them. A clock ticked somewhere unseen. The lowing of faraway kine came through the open window, a wistful plea for shelter and food, and the kindliness of milk-maid's hands.

Bowman felt a certain shamefaced annoyance against this unruly foundling, an idea of whose petulance disturbed the idyllic serenity of the hour. Hamilton waited. When Bowman looked again at his host he recognized so much of impatience in his expression that he thought he must have spoken and was waiting a reply.

"What did you say?" asked Bowman, rousing himself.

"I was saying that you would like to go to your room now?"

"To stay, do you mean? Oh, no! I would like to see it certainly, but I want to talk to you about the pit, the present system of working, something of the men, their grievances, their prejudices; I am sure"—with never such a slight tinge of condescen-

sion in his tones—"I am sure you will understand just what I want to get at."

"I am very sorry," said David, bluntly, "that I have no time to-night. The young laird was married in London to-day. There's a supper and a dance to-night in the granary of Bog-end Farm, where the factor lives. Marriotte was asked over to help with the flowers and such like, for she's very tasty. I am going to bring her home."

"Who will be there?" asked Bowman curiously.

"Oh! All the tenants and the servants in the big house, and word was sent that no one was to be forgotten, even Mysie, the hen-wife, that kept the young laird's white bantams when he was a boy."

"I suppose it would not do to go uninvited?" said Bowman, tentatively.

"But, yes!" said Hamilton, eagerly. "Mr. Birnie, the factor, would be delighted! Of course, the better people won't be there, but the tenants would be pleased, and it would be a new thing for you to see."

Hamilton was eager evidently that he should go. It would remove the rankling sense of discourtesy which made him loth to leave his guest.

"Then it is settled," said Bowman. "When do we start?"

"I need to change my clothes," said David; "I will not be long."

"I will see my room in the meantime," said Bowman.

"Good! Lizzie!! Candles!"

Lizzie produced the candles. Hamilton carried them unlit through the long passage and up a stair,

then, after traversing various inconsequent steps, up and down, he gave a candlestick into Bowman's hand at the door of a room.

"Go in," he said; "I hope you will be comfortable; your luggage came this morning and was put in. I'll away and change. Will you find your way back to the entry?"

"Yes," said Bowman, and entered the room alone. It was huge, the centre palely lit by the spectral light of the fading day, the corners full of dusky shadows like clustering wings.

A great bed, heaped high with coverlets and hung with gaily brodered curtains, was the principal piece in the room. There were some chairs, not too comfortable to make men or women forget their work, a generous hearth, with the fire ready laid, and a table drawn up by the window, the polished brass knob on its drawer gleaming like a ball of gold in the gloom; pushed back in one corner was a modestly equipped toilet-table, a square mirror, framed in tarnished gilt, hung against a straight width of yellowish cotton, embroidered with the same bright colours, and with the same extravagance of work as the bed curtains. Sheep-skin rugs lay here and there upon the floor—his portmanteaux were huddled in a corner.

Bowman looked out at the gathering twilight, he saw that the view gave upon a garden, he could distinguish but dimly the plants and rows of vegetables, a thread of ineffably sweet perfume stole up to him from the wallflowers. He turned away, found his way to the entry, and there, leaning against the door jamb, waited for David Hamilton.

As he stood he mused upon his cousin Edith, whom he was to marry some day; he touched the pocket where lay her little note which had greeted him upon his arrival in Edinburgh, a sense of comfortable well-being pervaded him, all his life was mapped out so satisfactorily. His past had been hard work, study and dreams—his future was smug-faced and respectable. Yet he thought of his marriage as far, far away, and would not bring it nearer by calculation or definite thought. It was to be. He said this to himself much as we acknowledge that we too must die, never realizing the words mean anything till we are in the grips with Eternity.

He had served a long probation, and his uncle had more than rewarded him, it was the more astonishing, as he reflected that he had not sought the prize he had won. His cousin Edith . . . It was strange he had never thought of her as a possible wife till she had been promised him . . . but nothing could be more suitable. (It is a good phrase that! If we are careful about the unit of comparison.) But no misgivings disturbed Bowman as he stood musing, his eyes fixed where, far away, the white gable of a farmhouse showed sharp against a dusky ridge of hills.

Presently Hamilton joined him, dressed in mouse-coloured corduroy, and the two set out.

By the same threshold where he had experienced that inexplicable tremor Harald Bowman left his last lover's dream of his cousin.

As they stepped forth together a thin sharp music wailed after them. It startled Bowman. Someone was playing a violin with the most exquisite delicacy,

and with an intensity of human feeling too keen to be well borne. Bowman paused.

The music grew and gathered. It wept and wailed, despaired, rebelled and interceded.

"It is little Davy," said Hamilton. "His music has come upon him; it is always so when his heart is sore, poor bairn!"

"But such music!" said Bowman. "And what a violin!"

"Yes! Davy can play as no one hereabout has ever played, and they say the fiddle is a fine one. It's all his fortune."

The music crept between and about them; yearning and pleading at their hearts it followed them far, far upon their way.

Bowman knew that little Davy was protesting against his presence in the most eloquent speech he knew, somehow the knowledge hardened his heart against this unseen foundling who played like an angel. It must be admitted we nearly all dislike our enemies more for their good points than for their bad qualities. Human nature is a little mean in some aspects.

The time was gloaming, that long tender twilight in which Scotch lovers woo their sweethearts, Scotch poets weave their rhymes, when the last song of the mavis dies, and the half-human note of the corn-craik's curious cry breaks from the bladed corn.

"I mind well the last tenants' supper I was at," said Hamilton, as they left the village and began the gradual ascent of Tak'-me-doon road; "it was when the old laird got a grand position in India.

That was the night Sandy Struthers drank champagne like water. You must have that story from Sandy!" He laughed and slapped his leg with a bit of willow withe which he carried; he was evidently in high spirits.

"Then you have been a tenant on this estate?" queried Bowman.

"Yes. My father and my father's father and his father before him have all lived their lives on the biggest holding on the estate. I myself held the 'tak' of Greenbraes till the foot and mouth disease ruined me, and I became bankrupt"—he used the word as one who will not hide from any humiliation if it be rightly his portion. It is a curious thing that in no country in the world is there such a stigma attached to bankruptcy as in Scotland. Stern old Scotland, who is usually so just to her bairns, is very hard upon them if they become bankrupt. Whether it is in protest against the implied poor judgment which imperils the national reputation for shrewdness, or whether because by implication all bankrupts are regarded as dishonest, it is impossible to say, but certain it is, and many a little child has first learned the meanings of life's bitterness when he found himself alone in the playground with only the shame of being a "bankrupt's wean" to keep him company.

"If the old laird had been at home he would have restocked the place for me—his son has been a hard deputy. However——" David paused like a man who has found words useless. It takes more than one sorrow before we learn the vanity of speech.

"But your father?—" hazarded Bowman.

"My folk were against my marriage," said Hamilton, simply. "And I do not see them any more."

"I did not mean to ask you questions," said Bowman, a trifle awkwardly.

"Do not disquiet yourself," said David; "you will hear the story from every old wife in the parish, but," he added, a note of tenderness so deep that it was almost harsh in his voice, "she's the best and bonniest woman God ever put breath into."

Bowman wondered; always a dreamer of dreams, he had come into little actual contact with the passions which make or mar men's lives. He had seen their workings in the brutal "black country" in Cornwall, he had known one or two manifestations nearer home, which he was too cruelly ashamed of to study; the noisome flowers of the wild blood of youth, they had blossomed scarlet and decayed into loathing between two suns. He had never striven to analyze their corruption. They had been—and no excuse nor palliation could blot them out. Yet it is but fair to him to say his faults had come to him along with his human birth, as part of the pitiful handicap which we all inherit, which in one form or another weighs down every wing.

Bowman's quick sympathies went out to Hamilton, who was walking as one who goes to his heart's desire. They struck across a field, faintly perfumed with the dew-wet grass, overtook and passed several loitering couples, and turning sharply round the corner of a little wood they came upon the great farm steading. They climbed an outside stair and

found themselves in the granary of Bog-end farm, the largest room under one roof in the parish.

"Mr. Birnie," said Hamilton, to a little man with a bushy red beard who stood by the door. "This is our new manager, Mr. Bowman. I told him he was sure of a welcome."

Mr. Birnie greeted Bowman effusively. (Had not his uncle dined at the "big house" upon the occasion of his visit to Trailfit?) Bowman responded with the charming geniality of a man who has the gift of popularizing himself. He spoke to his host a few moments, then turned to Hamilton, but he was gone to where, far down the room, his love-sharpened eyes had caught sight of a head crowned by a cloud of feathery black hair. The long granary, with its walls of unhewn stone, its oaken floor, its heavily-timbered roof high overhead, stretched away in a dim vista, broken by spaces of yellowish light from the lanterns which hung from the side beams. Upon either side had been placed rude settles made of boards, and along these the men and women sat, a range of strong rugged faces and rustic forms.

The lanterns gave strange effects of light and shade, here and there a face showed as if peering from the darkness, much as Rembrandt's pictures look forth from their subtly sombre settings. Near the end of the row where Bowman stood a man's head was thus projected, a strong head upon a columnar neck, with a crop of close-cut curly hair. There was a break in the line where Mysie, the hen-wife, stood leaning upon her staff. Rheumatism had left her no intermediate attitude between standing and lying. A gnome-like figure she was, all bent

and twisted like a gnarled old tree that has fought for its footing upon a bleak hillside; grotesquely silhouetted against the haze of light she seemed separate and apart from the others, yet she was only severed from them by years and pain. As Bowman's eyes travelled far down the line his gaze was arrested by a woman's head, round which, now that he had found it, all the light in the dusky room seemed to concentrate in an orange glow which nimbussed it like a halo. It was a small head, proudly held, the severity of its clear-cut profile softened by shadowy dark hair that seemed almost to stir with her own breath, it was so light and fine. Her brows were level and strongly-marked—her eyes looked out big beneath, her lips were red—like blood. Bowman looked long, till out of the darkness there grew to his vision the slope of a russet-clad shoulder, he could not follow the outline farther, for the gloom gathered her into its shadow as though she were its righteous belonging. Though Bowman's eyes strove against it the power of the darkness prevailed. The scene wrought upon Bowman like a spell. At either end a great door was swung back, showing a square of silvery grey sky, painted with remotely sparkling stars. The night was ineffably calm, no breath of wind stirred the flame of the lanterns, only the fragrance from a hundred homely flowers, the scent of dew-drenched sweet briar diffused itself through the room. Bowman fell into a dream, his eyes yearning ever towards the small deer-like head which seemed to hold itself with conscious erectness above the shadow, but whether the flame of the lantern was failing or

whether she had unconsciously changed her position Bowman could not decide, but the shadows crept closer about her till the rose-red lips were hidden and the oval of her face blurred into incompleteness. They had been singing when Bowman entered, and presently they began again. That night he heard Scotch songs sung as they ought to be sung, by lips which knew no other language than the *patois* of their heroic verse, with no other accompaniment than the pulses of the hearts they quickened.

For love songs and battle songs, for songs of home, and songs that wail the dead, what country can compare with Scotland?

The grey old mother, with her melancholy mountains and her storm-vext islands, does not send her children away from her mute of song; she has given them a wealth of lyric literature that they may ease their souls of the intolerable *heimweh* by singing of the old land across the seas, and through the simple dialect and melody of these songs the world recognizes the pathos, passion, and patriotism to which the heart of humanity pulses in every land, upon every sea.

O Scotland! If a child of thine forget thee, may his right hand lose its cunning! !

The singers stood up in their places and sang, some of them a little tremulously at first, but all joined in the refrains, and one after another took his turn. Presently a woman rose and Bowman never forgot that song till his last day. It was "The Bonnie, Bonnie, Banks o' Loch Lomond." She had the thrillingly high sweet soprano which one hears now and then in Scotland, and nowhere else

—a voice, it would seem, with a thread of silver in it.

“You tak’ the high road, and I’ll tak’ the low road,
And I’ll be in Scotland before ye !
But me and my true love will never meet again
On the bonnie, bonnie, banks o’ Loch Lomond.”

It is a song to take the heart out of one’s breast.

As it died away the supper was announced. Bowman was escorted by Mr. Birnie to the lower floor and given the place of honour at the board beside the factor. After he was seated he looked eagerly for the woman he had been watching, and for Hamilton; he could see neither. It could not be surely that the transition to the more clearly lighted room had destroyed the glamour of that half-seen face?

Someone approached the factor, and said, with just the suspicion of a sneer in his voice:

“David Hamilton’s awa hame. He bade me mak’ his compliments tae ye, and his wife’s wearied, and they’ve ta’en the road tae Farden Ha’.”

“Wearied!” said Mr. Birnie, with indignation; “she’s nae better than a strae wisp! And him tae gang before the supper and the dancing. It’s no wise-like o’ David! But he’s fair bewitched wi’ that wife o’ his.”

“Then you know David Hamilton and his wife?” said Bowman.

“A’body kens David Hamilton, puir callant!” answered a gaunt-faced man with a merry eye who sat at the other side of Bowman. “And a finer lad never stepped in shoon, but he’s made a puir job

o' himsel'. First he must needs tak' a blackamoor foundling boy tae keep, then he wisna content till he got Marriotte Hogg, quarrelling wi' his faither at sic a rate ower the woman that he turned him oot o' his hoose and snecked the door on him. Then he took the farm o' Greenbraes, put a fine stocking on't and bocht a' thing for the hoose (for he got naething wi' 'Marriotte but ill-will, curses, and a bonny face), then the foot-and-mouth disease cam' and in twa weeks David Hamilton hadna a standing beast on his farm; that feenished him. We a' thocht that he wad awa till America, but ye'll no' hinder him frae coming tae Farden Ha' and ganging oot wi' the miners. Certes! It's an awfu' doon-come tae David Hamilton, and him the brawest man in twinty parishes, and his brithers driving in their gigs and his faither following the hoonds like gentry."

"The more shame to them!" said Bowman. "And all because he married a poor woman!"

"A puir woman!" said his neighbour volubly, "goods and gear had naething tae dae wi't. She's come o' bad stock. Naebody that respected theirsels wad hae mairrat the dochter o' auld Marron Hogg. I wad be gey seek and sorry tae see ony o' ma folk tak up wi' sic a pedigree! Tae ma knowledge there's naething tae be said against the character o' David's wife, but the bad's in her!"

"Her mither and her mither's mither and a' the lot o' them were bad," said Mr. Birnie, taking up the parable. "Ane o' her forbears, some twa generations back, wis a gypsy woman. She camped wi' her tribe at the heid o' Bog-end moss, and it's tell't tae this day that there wis bloodshed in the parish ower her.

The hale country-side wis roused, for 'twis said not only the farmers' sons but the laird's son were wantin' her. And what think ye she did? She made up a pact tae tak' the laird's son, and he had gotten his banns, and wis' fain tae tak' her in spite o' his faither, wha wis nearly oot o' his jidgment, and the very mornin' she wis tae hae mairrat the young laird, the hizzie made a runawa' match o't wi' a curly-headed gamekeeper o' the laird's! What think ye o' that? Folk said 'twis the death o' the young laird. At ony rate he did not live long aifter it."

"And the woman?" asked Bowman.

"She bided a' her days in a wee bit hoose in the Peesweep Rows. And a stubborn ane she wis. For I mind ma auld grandmither saying that mony a time she's seen her look up frae her work as the laird's coach gaed by, and laugh tae hersel', and tell the bairns (of which ma auld grandmither was ane) that she wis a hantle happier in her but and her ben than ever the laird wis in his big hoose."

"She was not mercenary at any rate," said Bowman, moved to defend this wilful gypsy who threw away a fortune for a curly-headed gamekeeper.

"She wis a bad bizzum o' a woman, utterly withoot respect for her betters," said the factor conclusively.

"There's ill-luck follows the weemen o' her bluid, and I'm thinking it's fairly catched up wi' this ane David Hamilton's gotten."

"You don't like Hamilton's wife, evidently," said Bowman.

"Oh! For ma pairt I never changed words wi' her! She's gey bonnie tae look at, though no like a Scotch lass."

"The weemen o' her race never run the straight road, and that's the hale sum and substance o't," said Mr. Birnie. "But come, Mr. Bowman! I hear the fiddles tuning and the reel will be forming."

"David," Marriotte had said, as her husband sought her out, "is that the man who is to live with us?"

"Yes," said David, his eyes dwelling upon her.

For a long time Marriotte Hamilton was silent. David covered her hand with his, she yielded her fingers, but no tremor of delight thrilled them, they rested in his broad palm, not with the rapture of fulfilled joy, but rather with the timorous quietude of a bird which has found shelter from the storm, yet knows not what fresh alarm awaits it. Suddenly Marriotte said:

"Oh, David! I wish he had gone anywhere else to live!"

"Why, Marriotte," expostulated David, tenderly as to a child. "What new fright is this you've taken? Do you not like his look?"

"No, I—yes—very much," she stammered. "Take me home, David! I am so—tired—I——" She looked up at him, her lips were trembling, her eyes widened by prescient tears, her soft chin quivered; as his hand closed more firmly over hers he felt she was shaken throughout all her form.

"I will take you home," he said, his heart wrung by the appeal in her eyes. Alas! They did not meet his as the eyes of a wife which appeal and promise with one look; there was nothing but appeal in these dark eyes, and a blind trust that was sometimes betrayed by a flash of fear.

"Quiet—quiet, my dear," he said, soothingly. "We will go as soon as they make a move for the supper."

"I am bad to you always," she said in a suppressed tone, surcharged with feeling. "In great things and small I am unkind! It would be pleasure for you to sit here with your old friends, to join in the toasts, to dance afterwards! I will not go. I am quite well and right. It was a foolish fancy. I——." She was trembling more than ever, he felt her quiver at his side.

"It will be pleasure for me to take you home through the quiet night," he said. "Marriotte, my own wife, believe that"; he spoke a little solemnly. There are barriers more sacred than the closest union—such a barrier was between these two.

"You are *sure*?" she said eagerly.

"Sure," he answered.

"You are the best man that ever breathed," she whispered passionately; then giving free rein to the inexplicable nervousness and fear which possessed her—"Do let us go at once. Now. Do not let him see me, David! I don't wish him to! Take me home!"

"Is it Mr. Bowman you are feared for?" asked David as they moved behind the throng to the door. "I've never seen a pleasanter spoken man."

"You know I am foolish and fanciful," she said. "But I am afraid of him! I——"

"You are a poor tired bairn!" said her husband, his own heart filling as the homely word left his lips. So they went out into the soft tenderness of the Scotch night.

David Hamilton with all the passion of his manhood curbed by a great and god-like love.

Marriotte, his wife in name only, bowed beneath the burden of a love she could not return, but the beauty, generosity and self-sacrifice of which she recognized more and more fully every day.

So these two left the place of feasting to search out a City of Refuge for this woman, fleeing from she knew not what.

They reached Farden Ha' to be greeted by the wailing music of little Davy's violin, which from the old tower sobbed and moaned like a creature in pain.

Marriotte paused, trembling, upon the stones where Harald Bowman had experienced that weird thrill. A sick fear clutched her heart—yet she could not translate it any more than the wild creatures can comprehend the terror which makes them run to and fro before hurricanes and earthquakes.

"I cannot go in," she said in shamefaced desperation. "I cannot go in with Davy playing like that. Oh, David! Is he calling down a curse on us? It is like a death wail! I am afraid!"

"You're no weel!" said David, relapsing into *patois* in his anxiety. "See—I'll call Davy."

He left her shuddering upon the threshold from which Bowman had so lately parted. A word from David was enough to quiet the melancholy music, then he went out into the entry and brought the white-faced woman within doors.

"Let me stay with you a little," he pleaded. "It is not right for you to be alone. You are not well."

"I shall be quite right now," she said, a nervous

colour stealing into her face. "Quite right, I promise you."

After the dancing commenced, Bowman found himself ready to go back to Farden Ha'. He quickly made his adieus to Mr. Birnie, and was soon on his way to Trailfit.

The night was sweet and still—fresh with subtle perfumes the day never knows. Far-off upon his right he could see the dim outlines of the hills, to the left the lurid flames of the blast furnaces made fiery blots upon the sky, he could discern the monotonous thatch of the miners' rows, the dark bulk of the church amidst its trees, and lowering ominously over the whole scene the great square tower of Farden Ha'.

Bowman paused upon the threshold and looked back, filled with a strange reluctance to relinquish this hour to the past.

Many times after, when night had become for him a season of unrest and torture, his thoughts seeking refuge from the present sought out from all his past this one quiet hour and rested in its bosom as in a sanctuary, till new pain drove him forth again to the wilderness. If some benign blessing hallowed that hour for Harald Bowman, surely it bade him farewell for ever as he re-entered the portal of Farden Ha'.

The night deepened, all the village slumbered and slept; a late moon grew into the sky, and beneath it a little path braided of the footsteps of three people showed dark across the dew-pearled fields.

CHAPTER II.

"Children are born—in whose wistful eyes
 Are looks like lost dumb creatures in a crowd,
 That roam, and search, and find not what they seek.
 These children are life's aliens.
 The wise nurse
 Shakes her head, murmuring 'they will not live!'
 A piteous prophecy, yet best for them, ...
 Letting the lost ones steal away unhurt,
 Because unnoticed, from a world not theirs."

IT was late the next morning when Bowman entered the great living room where he had supped the night before.

By the window a woman sat, bent above a long web of yellowish cotton, embroidering it with flowers of different brilliant hues. She rose as he entered and came slowly towards him; she spoke, in almost pure English, but with the soft full accent of the Scotch lowland peasant.

"David has gone to the pit," she said; "I am Marriotte, his wife."

Bowman stood looking at her in speechless surprise, and she bore his scrutiny and returned his look with a wistful dignity that seemed wholly sad.

O, magical mystery of meeting eyes! O, the marvel and miracle of that moment, when for the

first time, two souls, astray here between earth and heaven, search each other for a sign; for in it is comprehended the baptism of new loves, the farewells to old affection, the awakening of hope, the birth of despair. For in the eyes of each there shines a question and an answer to one—the expression of the soul's eternal quest for its lost half.

To Harald Bowman, time which defaces so many memories, left unimpaired the first vivid impression of Marriotte's beauty. He saw a tall, straight woman, whose beautiful natural form was poised with the perfect dignity of health, to which was added a touch of conscious erectness. With such a carriage the heroic daughters of old paced forth to ratify their fathers' vows with their blood.

The attitude of this humbly born woman was that of one who bears upon patient shoulders the burden of a debt she has not incurred.

There was protest and patience, prescience and pathos, in every line of her form and face. Her level brows lent to the eyes beneath meanings of mystery, seeming to shadow secrets both sad and sweet. Marriotte's eyes were too sombre to entice the throng, there was more of defiance in them than invitation, but let a man once apprehend their magic, and never again was that man's soul wholly his. Her nose was straight and sensitive. Her mouth red as the poppies which grow wild in the wheat, her lips were always a little parted as if her soul trembled in perpetual suspense. Her hair clouded her brow, it was of extraordinary fineness, instinct with electricity; in time of thunderstorms, or when the air was charged with unseen lightning, Marriotte's eyes shone, her

lips quivered, her delicate nostrils dilated; she had ever a longing to go out and mingle with the elements in any time of storm, and during a high wind she was wont to wander agitatedly from room to room, longing to dash forth into the fields, to feel the wind winnowing her hair, to feel the blast beat back her breath and give her the wilder inspiration of its own haste. Her chin was softly curved in the lovable fashion that by mere beauty excuses the weakness it indicates, her cheeks were usually very pale, but sometimes they were warmed by the generous red blood of her heart till they flamed as richly red as the secret places of a damask rose. As in some silks the blending of different colours flashes a wavering gloss upon the surface so that we cannot pronounce upon the hue; as in an opal the iridescent fires melt into a nebulous flame, whose colour eludes us; as the clouds of sunset are shotten with scarlet and gold, blent with blue and topaz, till the vision is lost in a phantasy of colour, so the elusive nature of Marriotte Hamilton is difficult to describe.

She was indeed a creature of fire and snow.

If she did not bear the hall-mark of Heaven very legibly upon her, she was equally free from the sooty stigma of evil. Born in a different sphere, she might have had the world at her feet, as it was her lot was replete with the pathos of still-born potentiality.

Marriotte slowly coloured under Bowman's prolonged gaze

She felt the insult of his surprise.

By a swift flash of intuitive enlightenment he recognized her thought, and eagerly strove to make amends.

"I saw you and watched you last night during the

singing," he said—there was much of compliment in his tones.

"Were you there then?" she asked coldly.

"Yes," said Bowman, chafing that he had given her this opportunity, but disarmed by the immediate penitential droop of her eyelids. She moved towards the table with, or so it seemed to him, a sort of proud humility.

"Will I fill your tea?" she asked, looking deprecatingly at him. In such manner a princess might school herself to humble duties.

"O! I'll wait on myself," he said hastily, "I am well used to that."

"Well, if you want anything, call to Lizzie. She is in the kitchen there, and will hear you if you speak to her." This was evident, for the door Marriotte indicated opened, and Lizzie Lindsay's honest face appeared.

"What's awantin'?" she demanded.

"Nothing, just now," said Marriotte.

"I thoct ye cried on me," said Lizzie, and disappeared to tell little Davy, who was mooning in the kitchen.

"The mistress and the new manager arena' greeing well! They'll no' dae, thae twa," continued Lizzie, washing dishes vigorously. "Tak' ma word for 't! He's a gey upsettin' ane! And Mistress Hamilton 'll no 'tak 'airs and graces aff ony leeving man, let alane an Englishy. When I gaed ben the passage I heard her say, 'Ca' tae Lizzie,' and when I gaed in he wis sittin' glowering at her, and ye could have lichted a candle at her face. I'm thinkin' ma gentleman thoct tae bid her serve him! He'll sune tire o' that!"

As Lizzie closed the kitchen door behind her Marriotte turned to another door which gave upon the garden. Bowman saw her painful embarrassment. Evidently she hardly knew what to do. It struck him that his presence in the house of this woman might be very distasteful to her. Up to that moment he had regarded his Uncle's arbitrary arrangement wholly from the point of view of his own convenience.

He rose from the table.

"Mrs. Hamilton," he said, "I beg you not to go. You were sewing when I came in. Won't you just go on as if I wasn't here? If I am to be with you, you musn't let me disturb you in any way. Let me go in and out as I like and think no more of it, and above all, do not let my presence trouble you."

She turned from the door. "Thank you," she said. "You are very kind."

Bowman was genuinely shocked to see the glisten of a tear as she sat down by the window and bent above her work.

He was puzzled and distressed.

Afterwards, Bowman never saw a fuchsia flower without experiencing again the vague dissatisfaction with himself and pity for her, which strove in his mind at that moment, for upon the window-ledge beside her stood a fuchsia plant in full bloom, its royal colours of purple and crimson woven into a background for her down-bent head.

She leaned above her work, the side of the frame which held it pressed against her girlish bosom as she reached across, tracing the arabesqued design with swift skilful fingers. The silence was broken only by the tick, ticking of the wag-at-the-wa' clock, whose

pendulum exposed to the gaze of all men, conveyed, somehow, the impression of the self-righteous Pharisee praying at the street corner.

Bowman pushed back his chair and rose.

"Good-morning," she said, looking up at him with kindly eyes.

"Good-morning," he said, leaving his place, but at the door he paused.

"Will you show me the way to the pit-mouth?" he found himself modulating his voice to its gentlest tones.

Marriotte Hamilton had that peculiar appealingness which seems to implore gentleness from all men, and which, unless a man be a brute, never asks in vain.

She rose with a childish promptitude, which rendered the little service gracious. As she came towards him, a gay coloured thread caught about her and followed her half way across the room, then the bright strand tightened, clung, snapped, for she did not see it, nor feel the restraint of its feeble strength—one might fancifully imagine that some bond between the Marriotte of this morning, and the Marriotte of the past had been strained and broken.

She paused at Bowman's side. The morning light shone full upon her face, illuminating the candours of her innocent eyes, accentuating the pathos of her expression, revealing a hundred subtleties of tint and shadow. She pointed out the way to the pit, a little absent-mindedly it seemed, and then her eyes were lifted to the sky, which was very clear and full of promise.

"I have no doubt I shall find my way," said

Bowman, his mind turning energetically towards the difficulties of a new district.

"Oh yes," she said, "you cannot miss it"; he left her with a genial gesture, she watched him go swinging down the road, then turned and saw the broken thread waving about her. She unwound it with the characteristic care which a good workwoman takes of her materials, and picking up the other end where it trailed ineffectually upon the floor, she united them with a dexterous movement of finger and thumb, yet the break had been and the knot would always be there, hidden away on the wrong side of her work. How many knots roughen the underside of life!

All Trailfit had business which took it past the windows of Farden Ha' that day, and found itself aggrieved that there was no visible demonstration of change. Any other woman but Marriotte Hamilton would have had sufficient respect in her for the old order of things to have signalized a change by some outward manifestation. But the exterior of Farden Ha' was bafflingly inexpressive. The doorstep had not even received an extra coating of pipe-clay.

As the day wore on the women murmured together. When Isobel Telpher passed at two o'clock in the afternoon, she saw Marriotte watering her fuchsia, her tea-rose, and her two cherished geraniums, from the little brown tea-pot with the broken spout, in which she soaked and re-soaked the spent tea leaves, it being the belief in Trailfit that tea water was a great thing to promote plant growth. This evidence of Marriotte's indifference was received with shocked disapproval.

"Watering floers the same 's she wis a leddy, and his foot het on the door stane!"

- Margaret Pillans came over to Isobel Telpher in a state of excitement.

"It wisna' for naething Marriotte wis waterin' floers oot o' her teapot. She maun hae gien him a tea dinner!" Isobel felt aggrieved that Barbara had arrived at this conclusion first, but excused herself by remembering the trial she had had, for during her absence, Mrs. Haisty had been in to ask the loan of the toasting fork, and little Bell Telpher had let her away without discovering, definitely, if it was Mrs. Haisty's sister from Glasgow way (who was a pernicky body, and kept a shop) or her man's uncle, a person of substance, who was expected.

Old Fairservice, the sexton, came past Marriotte's window, and, being always a neighbourly man, and "newsy," stopped at Mrs. Jamphares'.

"It isna'," he said, "the mere fact o' her daen' naething, at least, naething tae seegnify, but it's the sicht o' her, in a clean polky and new kamed hair, sittin' doon at the sewin', the same 's a New Manager in the hoose wis naething by ordnar'—and Lizzie ganging her ain gait in the kitchen, and the hoose a' throu'lither ahint her. It's no' sae much that as the *sicht* o' her!" Perhaps more of us are like the sexton than would acknowledge it. It is not so much the misdeeds of our enemies, as the sight of them, which is vexing as smoke to our righteous eyes.

The evening drew on apace and popular indignation deepened. The proper thing for Marriotte to have done was to have put on her second best and paid a friendly visit to one or other of the village

dames—not necessarily as if by intent, if she had done her part, they would have done theirs; if she had strolled aimlessly by, they would have invited her in, and if she had hesitated and required pressing—Well! It was no more than her due under the circumstances, and they would have accorded it. They themselves would not cheapen such information as Marriotte possessed by giving it too readily—but in the very famine of curiosity to withhold food as Marriotte was doing was an abomination.

The very least she could have done would have been to dispatch Lizzie to the stores for messages—but Trailfit remembered the baskets which had been sent to Farden Ha' the day before.

"She'll hae planned it!" said Mrs. Jamphraes. "The limmer! Lizzie Lindsay 'll be bizzing in the kitchen like a bee aneth a tumbler, and yon yin 'll no' let her oot! I wadna hae her conscience for the Casseles bank accoont!"

It was gloaming when the observant women saw young Tam Jamphraes being dispatched by his mother on an errand. Isobel Telpher crossed the street promptly and looked pointedly after Tam.

Mrs. Jamphraes said nothing.

"Tam's lengthening oot!" said Isobel. "It's fair wonderful hoo he's grown the last six months!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Jamphraes. "The Jamphraes are a' lang-legged."

Barbara Pillans sauntered in from next door.

"We were sayin'," said Mrs. Telpher, significantly, "that Tam Jamphraes is gey weel grown!"

"He is that," said Barbara. "He'll be a braw man."

"O! Sic like 's his neebors!" said his mother, and it was not till her audience was increased by Jean Fairservice and Betty of the Knocken, that she condescended to say, with an elaborate affectation of carelessness, which her listeners saw through but admired:

"I've sent Tam doon tae Farden Ha' tae speir the loan o' a tambouring hook from Mistress Hamilton." Sensation. Then Mrs. Telpher:

"He's gey gleg, Tam!"

"There's no much misses him!" said Mrs. Fairservice.

"I'll be in on ma road frae the stores," said Betty of the Knocken, and set forth briskly.

Barbara waited a moment in silence, she herself had no force of character.

"Ye've a heid, Mag," she said to Mrs. Jamphraes, admiringly. "There's no' the like o't wagging in the session." Then she departed. Now it was not seemly that any of these ladies should try to get Tam's information except secondhand through his mother. But they waited impatiently the reappearance of the red worsted cap which the school teacher said covered more mischief than any other ten in the parish. After a delay big with anticipation, Tam came up the street on the run. He delivered the tambour hook and made for the door, but his mother called him, arresting his impatient bare toes upon the threshold. Tam had thoroughly enjoyed his errand, having had two fights *en route*, and an exciting round with Haggis Sandy, who was well "on," and in the irascible mood which made him a joy for ever to the youthful tormentor.

"And what said Marriotte tae ye?" queried Tam's mother, blandly.

"She showed me the gairden," said young Tam.

"Gairden!" ejaculated Mrs. Jamphraes. "Her and her gairdens! Did ye see the new manager?"

"No. He wis ootbye."

"Whaur?"

"I didna speir."

"Is 't a wean o' mine?" asked Mrs. Jamphraes. Her husband, supping his porridge, answered not again, for he knew the question was purely rhetorical.

"What I'm wanting to be at is the speech ye had wi' Marriotte Hamilton. Did or did she not say 'Manager' tae ye?"

"No. She asked if we were a' weel, and I tell 't her we were, and I tell 't her Auntie Kate wis coming tae leeve wi' us, and that ye had a new cheeny teapot" (Tam added this with confidence, feeling that it would count well with his mother, as indeed it did), "that you and Mistress Symple werena' speaking, that Maggie wis tae leave the factor's at the term, that ye burned the last batch o' scones, that Draffen the packman was gaun tae bring ye a new goon o' the same cloth and a hantle cheaper than ye could get it at the stores——" Mrs. Jamphraes gave her heir a sounding box on the ear, and her augmenting wrath fairly boiled over. She felt there was a painful parallel between her case and that of Balak, who sent out a prophet to curse his enemies, and, lo! he blessed them altogether.

"Ye tell 't her a' that, did ye? Ay, she's fine at the questioning. Ma certes! She wad speir the meat oot o' an orange! She could jist pick your

banes clean, 'at could she, and ye wadna ken ye were telling onything by ordnar!"

"Man!" amended his father, "there's precious little in ye but what yer spoon pits in! Did ye no jalouse she wis jist ryping ye for clash?"

"She gaed me a jeely piece, and tell't me I wis welcome tae guddle in the burn at the foot o' her gairden; there's a hole there whaur the troots soom in *thoosands*, and she asked me if the flooers were daein' well, and promised me a root o' dusty millers."

"Awa wi' ye!" cried his mother, with indignation. "She's bocht ye and sell 't ye, and ye'r prood o't! Awa wi' ye! There wis aince a time when a' body's lives depended on shet mooths! It's gey fortinet thae days is by wi', I'm thinkin'! The Jamphraes wad hae ill daein' wi' sic' precautions. There's yer faither! 'Odds! He'd clash wi' a cock on a midden!"

This was base—as Jamphraes *père* had nobly supported the attack upon Jamphraes *fil's*—but Mrs. Jamphraes did not find young Tam a sufficiently inspiring theme for the eloquence she felt stirring within her. Young Tam's training had been such that there was no reasonable hope of his answering back, and as her husband upon rare occasions had been known to illustrate the proverb of the recalcitrant worm, there was always a certain amount of pleasurable anticipation in training the guns upon him. Thus it was that frequently Mrs. Jamphraes, beginning with young Tam, so warmed to her subject, that she abruptly changed the plan of campaign and attacked the head of the house.

"It's quite true that I'm saying," continued Mrs. Jamphraes, in the tone of a woman who has been violently contradicted, although her husband had not uttered a sound. "It's quite true, I defy any leevin' soul tae contradick me! I say the Jamphraes, man and mither's son o' them, are fell fond o' the soond o' their ain tongues. Ye needna sit girnin' at me, the same 's I wis tellin' an unkenne'd fact! What's that ye're sayin'?" (Jamphraes had given no indication of a desire, or intention, to speak.) After a dramatic pause, his wife continued:

"I wad be gey seek and sorry tae hae a tongue I couldna control." Jamphraes' lips parted slightly, then closed. He looked at young Tam, young Tam kept his eyes fixed on vacancy—no ripple of expression disturbed the serenity of his countenance. He knew better than incur the penalty for *lèse majesté*! Nothing escaped Mrs. Jamphraes. She saw the tremour of her husband's lips, knew the thought he did not put into words, and rose to the defence.

"What's that ye're saying? I'm black affronted that ye wad say sic' a thing before the callant! Dinna liken me tae the Jamphraes. Hech! Ye yersel' wad speak tae pay the national debt, and that wadna be cleared wi' few words! And if that wis a'! But ye're no tae be trusted. It wis a fine like thing ye did when Maister Kello gave ye his confidence about the licensing o' the cot-hoose taverns, and the next day ye'll no hinder ye tae gang awa doon tae Maister Kello and gie him back his ain confidence in a secret! Man! I wadna be sae quick accusin' ither folk o' scratchin' if I wis

tormented wi' the itch mysel'! What are ye standin' glowering at, Tam? Hae ye neither book nor slate tae fill yer fingers?" Obeying this intimation Tam betook himself into the back room, ostensibly to find a book, but in reality to flee like a mad thing through the back door, scale the dyke like a wild-cat, tear through the banker's field, where the Highland cattle were pasturing, and head, with a whoop, to where he saw a band of boys gathered in the glebe field. He arrived in the midst of the conclave like a whirlwind, and acted as a storm-centre, from which radiated rows of every description. For three seconds after his arrival every boy's hand was raised against his neighbour, and a general fight was going on, above the energetic clamour of which could be heard young Tam's voice inviting each and all of them, collectively and individually, to "come to the kirkyaird." An invitation significant of a thirst for gore—for one Trailfit boy to invite another to go to the kirkyard was equivalent to a challenge *à outrance*, for it was an accepted tradition in Trailfit, that if one boy killed another in fair fight within the kirkyard gate, he would be safe from the gallows-tree. And thus it was that the noise of desperate combat sometimes disturbed the quiet of the graveyard, but if the sleepers numbly heard they paid no heed, for few of the stern old elders slumbering there had not in their time bidden their rivals forth to the kirkyard, and few of the resting mothers in Israel had not cleansed mutinous countenances, staunched noses, and mended clothes after such battles.

Whilst the village speculated over the New Manager, and reviled Marriotte for her reticence concerning him, all was going quietly with Bowman in his new abode. Marriotte, far from rejoicing beyond her neighbours, looked at them wistfully as one or other passed her window, envying them the housewifely experience which doubtless made them so much more capable than she of dealing with the knotty problem of making Bowman comfortable. It was characteristic of her innate independence that she thought of the situation in this way; it was to make him comfortable, not to please him in the poorer sense, that she racked her brain, counting over and over her simple resources, reckoning again and again what she would have for his dinner and his supper, watching him with eyes as innocent as an eager child's to see if he was pleased. When he laid down his knife and fork with an air of finality, she would look over at David with positive pleading in her eyes, until he, taking the hint, would urge the hospitalities of the table upon Bowman. Bowman, smiling despite himself at Marriotte's shy "Do?" would excuse himself and say he must not be expected to ply such a knife and fork as "big David Hamilton," and little Davy scowled blackly, drawing down his thick brows and setting his pointed white teeth, for from the first he hated Harald Bowman, and the latter was conscious of a distinct dislike of the silent boy whom David Hamilton loved, whose great eyes watched Bowman with that mixture of passion and cunning which make the eyes of his people eloquent in love or hate. In the evenings David and Bowman would sit for hours

talking about the pits, the men, the former manager (who had been a brute and a slave driver, and who did not escape from the hands of the Trailfit miners scatheless), and from these topics their talk would stray to wider fields, and they would speak of Scotland, of which David knew every song and legend, or David, naïvely anxious for information, would question Bowman about England and France—for Bowman had been to France on happy student holidays, and there never was a Scotchman born who did not like to hear of France—the fair land that was so good to Queen Mary and Bonnie Prince Charlie. As they talked little Davy crouched somewhere near by, pretending to con over his book, but all the time watching them furtively, and a little apart, where the light was best, sat Marriotte, ever busy at her gay embroidery, like a humble Penelope, looking up now and then to smile upon them, or rising to answer a piteous gesture from Lizzie at the door. Sometimes returning from these domestic excursions, she would pause beside them a moment, to listen perhaps to the end of some tale.

"Sit down, Marriotte, you'll tire yourself. I'll be putting that fine seam of yours behind the gathering coal, and boiling the kettle with it yet. Come—give it over and come over here."

"Do sit down and be idle with us," Bowman would say, getting up from his place with a courtesy which made David seem awkward in the arm-chair, but with a half shy, half grave little gesture of thanks and denial she would go back to her place. Bowman remarked, with wonder, that her manner towards her husband was as delicately shy almost as with

him. It moved his admiration, there was something of inviolate maidenhood in her reticence of caress and speech.

Sometimes if David's insistence seemed a little eager, a trifle pained, she would accede gently, lay down her bright cottons, cover her work, and slip away out into the old dewy garden, where through the little old-fashioned panes of the broad window the men could see her moving up and down between her rows of simple flowers, stooping now to raise a flower bent with its own weight, now to pluck off a dead leaf or withered branch, again to pull up a weed, or disappearing to return with water with which she refreshed the little beds all bordered by Nancy Pretty. At such times David's speech and attention gradually wandered from the subject in hand, the words would fail upon his lips as his wife paused in her walk, and with some awkward but smiling excuse he would finally leave Bowman to go out to her. Then Bowman would go up to his room, and watch from his window as these two married lovers paced back and forth between the borders. At such times a loneliness of spirit fell upon him, some shadow of influence, doubtless, from the old stones, the silent garden—perhaps of these two figures moving, so close together, so far away from him, through the shades of the gathering night.

Marriotte's tambouring was a grave scandal in Trailfit; according to Trailfit ethics, Marriotte, after her marriage, should have devoted herself to household duties, specified in the vernacular as "makkin' her man's meat, mendin' his claes, and orderin' his hoose," when this was done she should have given

the fag end of the day to embroidery. The tambour work was a species of chain-stitch embroidery wrought in soft untwisted cottons with a little hook which pulled the thread up through the fabric. The traced designs were given out by a man who came round at stated intervals to collect the completed work and arrange for its transmission to the wholesale houses which ordered it. It was used for curtains, bed draperies, and "body linen"—and the brightly-coloured webs which Marriotte worked were sent out to Calcutta, going back, like disciples, to the birthplace of their cult.

Marriotte Hogg and her mother were said, by the Middleman, to be the most skilful tambour workers in all Scotland.

When the evil days fell upon Greenbraes, David was very ready to accede to Marriotte's request to be allowed to go on with the tambouring as she had done before her marriage, that she might keep Lizzie Lindsay to do the household work, for which she had no liking. David made no more of the village talk than he did of the buzzing of the gnats above the burn; if Marriotte was pleased—that was the important consideration. Dear as Scotland was to him, he would fain have emigrated when the crash came and he was bankrupt, but Marriotte's very soul clung to her country. Failure was very bitter to David Hamilton. His big sensitive heart bled unseen from many wounds, but when Marriotte begged him not to leave the heather he girded up his courage and remained in Trailfit, and the sight of the familiar hills, the scent of the heather, the smell of the peats, the gold of the whin, and

the broom, and the song of the laverock soothed the stings of poverty and drew the poison from the wounds.

Marriotte had eaten bitter bread in secret because of their bankruptcy—she did not let David see all her grief, for she was ever generous, and would rather bear pain unsoothed than inflict the knowledge of it on him. She knew David's greatest grief was that he could not keep her folded away from all toil and hardship as he had meant. Poverty's breath chills many loves, but had Marriotte ever loved David, misfortune would have strengthened her love; she was not the type of woman to falter from the side of a man when adversity drew near. There was no lack of thrifty women to commiserate "puir David Hamilton" for having married such a poor housewife; there were many maidens to rejoice mightily over Marriotte's "dooncome," for any of them all would have been a proud woman to have gone home to Greenbraes as the bride of David Hamilton.

No words could express how Marriotte missed the quiet little home in the uplands, where the hares darted past the very doors, where, from the garden could be seen the slope of five green-bosomed hills, where the sound of the brawling mountain brook, as it foamed over the old mill-wheel, the bleating of the sheep, the lowing of the kine, the singing of the birds, mingled with equal freedom, and sounding thus seemed equally sweet. Here Marriotte had known for the first time the beauty of the wistful gloaming, the magic of the morn, the glory of the day, the solemn silent peace of

night in a world undefiled by coal dust, undisfigured by black heaps of "waste."

Her home had been previously a terribly squalid one--yet the whitest blossoms rise up through stagnant water, the silvery gull plunges into the foulest depths and emerges unsmirched. A mother, whose morals were by inheritance attainted, a drunken wastrel of a father, a brace of evil brothers, these made her family; the curses of drunken brawls, the bitterer imprecations of sober quarrels, an atmosphere of public contempt and suspicion, this had been her home life. It was from this that David Hamilton had brought away his bride, bewitched by big dark eyes, an appealing personality, a gentleness that crept into his heart and seemed to nestle there as if by unquestioned heirship. There was little wonder that his family, free from the beguilement of her beauty, did not approve. People of their class in Scotland think much of old names and honest forbears, they want no tainted blood to sully the stream.

The doctrines of predestination and heredity jump well together, the saving salt of regeneration may or may not be granted to souls, but no provision is made for the taint of evil blood, its florescence in evil deeds is fully expected, and is regarded with the stoic philosophy which Christian fatalists manifest in regard to their neighbours' sins.

Of David's family there is little need to speak, when the obligations of the birth-bond are once broken the severed strand is never knit again. No one can appreciate what such a severance means unless he realizes how strong family ties are in

Scotland ; it is a grave matter, indeed, there, to deny that "blood is thicker than water."

David's folk turned from him utterly when he married Marriotte ; he listened to their arguments till they degenerated into bitter invective, then his wrath flamed up. He left his father's house, taking as farewell the echo of his mother's shrill warning :

"Think well before ye marry that woman, David ! Ye'll just rue it once, and that'll be all your days ! The women of Marriotte Hogg's blood never run the fair road."

This was the benediction the union received from his side, and Marriotte came forth to the shelter of his name before a cloud of curses.

Some from her drunken English father, some from her ill-tongued mother, who was loath to lose her work, some from her brothers, bestowed more from a sense of the fitness of things than from any personal sentiment they entertained.

In maudlin moments Marriotte's father was wont to talk of days to come when Marriotte was to take her beautiful face to London, and be dressed in silk attire, and provide generously for her loving parent. How this was to be accomplished he did not explain, but when he talked thus Marriotte's mother took him away or bade her begone from the room. Yet he often looked at his daughter's tall straight shape and her high-held head with a strange expression in his bleared eyes, and until she was too old beat her when she used Scotch words, and once when he found her washing an iron pot he flung it out of the door so violently that it broke into a dozen pieces, for each of which he

gave her an oath and an order to do no more scullion's work, but to sit at her sewing and keep her hands white. And gradually out of his inconsequent rages and strange looks there was evolved an ominous foreboding which chilled Marriotte's heart, the more because this fear was so vague and indefinite—one would not have thought Marriotte's heart would have clung to a country which had only given her this—but the love of country is a strange and holy thing, so exalted is it beyond any thought of self. It would seem that one, at least, of the ancient virtues has survived the disappearance of the others. So that some loyal bosoms love their country as fiercely as did the wayworn Ulysses, when he found himself ready to die of longing for "smoke that rose from hearths in his own land." And no smoke, though rising from fires built of olive boughs and orange branches, heaped with cedar, nourished with balsam, sprinkled with spices, and offered to the Gods, was ever half so dear as the peat reek of Scotland.

CHAPTER III.

"Stand, fated house, for evermore alone !
 Stand, 'mid thy barren gardens, wild, and swept
 By winds that wailing through thy trees have kept
 The tune of grief. Be thou of joy unknown . . .
 The summer misbecomes thee, O dread house !
 Glad songs of birds sound alien in thy boughs !
 Death keeps thy doors, thy passages are full
 Of ghosts that sorrow makes not beautiful.
 Forlorn, barred, silent—keep thy secret well,
 That none who pass may guess what thou could'st tell."

HARALD BOWMAN was the nephew of old Harald Bowman the millionaire mine owner. His mother had been the only daughter of her house, and she had been so left to the evil devices of her own heart as to marry against the wishes of her brother. Old Harald Bowman (middle-aged Harald Bowman then) had been entirely right in his estimate of his prospective brother-in-law's character, but neither his reasoning, nor his conclusions, had any effect upon his pretty sister ; she married the man of her choice and rued it all her days, for even the gingerbread of the honeymoon was but thinly gilt. Edward Tregenna was as grievously disappointed as his wife in their union. He had hoped to dip his hand deeply into the Bowman coffers, he had regarded Clara Bowman as bearing the same relation to her

brother's wealth as government bonds do to cash; when he found his security repudiated, he raged and despaired. He was a "fine figure of a man," such an one as commands a good price in the matrimonial mart, he was fain to believe himself very badly used. He habitually spoke as if he had been made the victim of a deep-laid conspiracy to entrap him into marriage, although if there had been any intent to beguile in Harald Bowman's request to him to leave his house and never enter it again, it must have been super-subtle indeed, for upon the surface it was a rhetorical "kicking out" which should have hurt the moral man as much as a well applied and contemptuous boot would have done the person. To all his complaints and reproaches his wife answered not again. There was a fibre of her brother's strength in her. It had enabled her to take her own head in regard to choosing a husband, it now enabled her to face, uncomplainingly, the result of her folly. She had, indeed, made her own bed, and she constrained herself to lie on it—it was not an easy couch nor dreamless, but no one ever saw her rubbing her bones nor heard her relate her visions. Those whose eyes have been blinded by belladonna for an hour or two, often see more clearly ever after. Clara Bowman's temporary blindness had given place to an almost painful clearness of vision. She was not the type of woman to continue loving a man such as her husband, ideality was not sufficiently strong in her to maintain the halo round her own imaginings, she saw him for what he was, and of all her love there remained but a certain poor pity for the disappointed creature who had so failed in his

miserable plans, who kicked so hard against the pricks of his own defeat. The only glimpse she had of the higher significance of the matter, was a dim and struggling sense of the ironic humour of the situation. From this was born, now and then, a grim smile, the efflorescence of an otherwise barren philosophy. However, she had had her moment of revolt against constituted authority, and—so strange we are!—she found the memory of that sweet, even when viewed across the chaos of consequences. Of course, she had a child. Fate is somewhat guilty of anti-climaxes, and frequently brings a new actor upon the stage when the curtain is about to fall on a played-out drama, and weary players; it may have been that Clara Tregenna's artistic sense was jarred by the introduction of this superfluous personage upon the scene, but, at any rate, her courage faltered for the first time. She wrote to her brother—his *ultimatum* was sent by return of mail, to leave her worthless husband and come home—"home"—it had a pleasant sound, like the name of the Fatherland in an exile's ears—but Clara Tregenna now saw in her husband the prefiguration of the Father. She refused her brother's offer, and before her brother read her answer she had no husband to leave, for that worthy had taken the initiative; "a wife was bad enough," he wrote—"but a wife and baby—!" Words seemed to fail him, and, indeed, more would have been superfluous.

"In sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children," says the old curse, so, perhaps, Clara Tregenna is not to be considered as at all exceptional. From time immemorial, women have had a talent for living

up to such cheerful prophecies. For five years, Clara Tregenna lived, dying like the elm, "in secret from the core," but at last came the final folding of the hands. Her boy, named Harald after his uncle, was left to that uncle's care. The child had heard nothing of his father but warnings to beware of him, had seen nothing of him but his influence made visible in the pale terror which one night blanched his mother's face, at the sound of a strange footstep. He had been taught to regard his uncle as infallible, unchangeable and omnipotent, all that was good and just. In the mystery play enacted upon the stage of the young child's imagination, these two unknown personages, uncle and father, enacted respectively the parts of God and Devil, and he regarded them as such—so the little Harald must have been a Hebrew in religion, for his childish conception of the Supreme was not that of the merciful Christian cult, but of the stern Judaic Jehovah, who demands "an eye for an eye"—yet his teachings upon this point had been wholly indirect—for never till her dying day did Clara Tregenna speak of her brother as unmerciful—only he was very just, too just perchance for ordinary mortals to appreciate, but his sister had enjoyed special illumination upon the subject.

Old Harald Bowman adopted the child, changing his name from Tregenna to Bowman with due legality.

It is said that the "tender mercies of the wicked are cruel"—one might say, "the mercies of the good are not always tender."

The text about "breaking the bruised reed" has become a dead letter in the alphabet of our righteousness—truly, our charity is no longer indiscriminate.

Young Harald was put into a stern school when he was placed under the dominion of his uncle. But as some flowers only bloom in poor soil, so, perhaps, some children are none the worse of a barren childhood. This is, indeed, a hard saying, but one must set the father's part in Harald Bowman over against his uncle's *régime*. The child's inheritance was such as goes not out save by drastic measures, and at any rate the boy was not consciously unhappy, only heart hungry, and, indeed, even with strict rule, there is no justification for starving the affections—so after all we must throw up the brief for old Harald Bowman, and admit that he left his nephew to a stern, solitary, unloved childhood. The boy did his uncle credit at school, the just man put it down in his accounts (for he kept moral accounts, as some keep ledgers). He sent Harald to one of his mines to serve an arduous apprenticeship. Harald had hardly ever seen his uncle, and had never seen his uncle's wife, when she died, leaving one fair-haired girl, ten years younger than the swarthy cousin, who worked so hard in the office of the great mine, who dreamed such glorious dreams in the gaunt room of his lodging; from the window of which he watched the moon on summer nights grow from the hunter's horn to the warrior's shield. Harald Bowman was an enthusiast and a dreamer. His uncle was scrupulously exact in allowing him a fair wage in ratio to the other men, this Harald saved heroically, to spend it during the fortnight of his holidays in a trip to France. Is there anything in all the world more pathetically glorious than the ardour with which a young eager soul sets forth to find and see the

countries in which, upon the foundation of great books, his imagination has already been building? Light in pocket and heart, untired, unwearied, full of the generous unreasoning worship we give the great ere we have become jealous, and conscious of our own littlenesses; ready to lay down all for a dream's sake, to follow a vision to the death; when a bite of brown bread and a draught of water are ambrosia and nectar, because we remember those of the glorious "Choir invisible" who lived thus; when to the glamoured vision every goose is, indeed, a swan, and every quean a lady—in distress, perhaps, in want of a prince; when, with generous lance atilt we run at every harsh reality to release the Lady Romance imprisoned there, though unseen save by the eyes of youthful faith; when the sight of a poet's epitaph moves us to swift sharp tears—when to pass over paths one has trodden uplifts us into a seventh heaven of strange abstraction; when the "glory on the grass" is yet visible, though untranslatable; when at the sound of a bird's cry, or the sight of its sharp wing against the blue, we pause, breathless, and wonder if such or such an one ever heard or saw it thus; when the equation of our dreams and our destiny seems to promise a sequence of delight. O! elate, generous youth! O! sweet wild ways of springtime wherein we gather those

" Peerless flowers which in the rudest wind
Never grow sere,
When rooted in the garden of the mind,
Because they are the earliest of the year."

Upon these expeditions to France, too, Harald

experienced the austere joy of stinting himself in food, that he might pay for a place among the Gods of the gallery, where, from out an atmosphere of orange peel and smoke, spiced with the more pungent scent of poor liquor, he yearned over the railing towards the stage and saw upon it Gods and Goddesses, moving, transfigured out of the likeness of men and women by the immortal words they uttered, the meaning and message of which was perhaps more clear to his enthusiastic boyish mind than ever it was in those later days when he sat in the boxes supplementing his vision with French opera glasses, when the padding on the calves of the men and the paint upon the women's cheeks were apparent to him, and the Forest of Arden only a well set scene. Alas! For the wizard gold of youthful imagination there is given us but the withered leaf of experience. But Harald Bowman was not only a dreamer of dreams; indeed, when he was holidaying he was like one playing truant from his workaday self. He had a strongly practical side to his nature, and all the circumstances of his life tended to develop it. An attenuated inheritance of manual dexterity from some forbear who had worked with his hands, made him exceedingly cunning at fashioning models and drawing plans. His gaunt room was encumbered with plans of "workings," so improved and systematized that some of them resembled rather the streets of a City all composed of Castles in Spain, than the burrows wherein the human moles dig so laboriously. Great bristol boards were adorned with drawings of complicated air-shafts, so arranged as to seem to obviate all the faults of the existent systems; Harald

used to smile half amusedly, half tenderly, over these plans in after days, for whilst they provided for the rarest, most phenomenal accidents, they left the ordinary prosaic, probable, accidents unthought of. So it is. We make strong our defences against all kinds of imaginary foes, and one whom we have warmed in our bosom turns and slays the love we have left unguarded.

The corners of Harald's rooms were embarrassed by heaps of miners' lamps; some entirely new, others showing modifications of the then accepted models. He was always evolving plans to defeat the deadly gas, to deny and defy its poisonous insistence. Among the models of his lamps was one torn, twisted and melted out of all semblance to its intention. Harald had been very confident over the merits of that particular lamp, so much so that he tried it at the end of a rod, pushing it close to where, in an old working, a "blower" was issuing from the *goaf*.

The lamp was not a success. Harald meditated upon its defects for some two months, on his back, for it took about that time for his picturesquely shattered bones to knit.

This incident somewhat qualified his enthusiasm about lamps, but by the time he was able to be out again he had evolved a brand new theorem about blasting (in his day it was generally done with gunpowder, and the danger from both detonation and flame was great in a mine at all fiery), so for the next six months he was busy over cartridges of various volcanic ingredients.

Invention is the imagination of the practical mind,

mathematical theorems its poetry. With these devices Harald saved his soul alive; release was near at hand—old Harald Bowman descended upon the pits one day like a wolf on the fold, investigated everything, from the underground stable for the pit ponies to the garret room where his nephew lived. He saw Harald's work, that it was good, he gathered his own impression from the room, with its plans and models, he gazed into Harald's unflinching, if somewhat sombre, eyes—and he took his nephew back to London with him.

Henceforth the lines of Harald's life were cast in pleasant places. After many days the justice which his mother had extolled was vindicated.

Harald was set to work in the London offices of the mines, but he lived with his uncle and cousin Edith in the beautiful country house in Surrey, and went to business in a top hat and first-class compartment. Instead of a meagre salary he had a handsome allowance; he bought beautiful books, but he read the old ones still; the old ones upon whose pages were grimy marks of coal dust, and here and there a blistered stain, where the rare tears had fallen; the baptism of boyish victory—or the dew upon that young ecstasy which is full of uncomprehended pain.

Harald remained at his uncle's house for some years, until his uncle made a hurried trip to Scotland, where, whilst his rivals were writing back and forth, he bought the Trailfit mine over their heads and became its owner. It was one of the biggest transactions in mining property ever known. Upon the old man's return to England his nephew was

told off to proceed to Trailfit to take the complete practical management of the colliery. The workings were in disorder, the discipline *nil*, the system rotten, the men dissatisfied, this was all to be remedied. Autocratic old Bowman had conceived the idea that to understand properly his new charge Harald must live amongst the men. It was characteristic of him that he neither questioned his right to command Harald's obedience, nor thought of the effect of the sudden shock of contrast between his nephew's present life and the isolation of a Scotch mining village. Old Bowman no sooner saw David Hamilton than he decided that he would be an excellent henchman for Harald. So before he left Trailfit the old man arranged with David that his nephew should live at Farden Ha', and he told his nephew this part of his plan with no more thought about asking his opinion upon it than he had of asking him to arrange the financial polity of his firm—indeed not so much, for Harald's skill had gone to the framing of the constitution of the new colliery.

The night before Harald left Surrey, his uncle had promised him his cousin Edith to wife. It was the old story. The king's daughter to wife, and the half of the kingdom. His cousin Edith! Surely a great gift, not the less valuable because proffered unsought. Harald Bowman had not fallen in love with his blonde cousin, although after they were engaged he wondered at the obtuseness of his affections. The fact was he had looked to see the visible sign, manifest to the eyes of the elect, upon the brow of his fair Helen. He had expected love to enter his life scattering flowers and singing epithala-

miums; he had thought love would enter his heart as the illumination of faith floods the intellect with a light whose source is inexplicable but whose radiance is unmistakable—and, lo! all this time his fair-faced cousin had been in his heart, at least, she must have been, he concluded, for he accepted this part of his uncle's plan in the same cordial spirit as he had accepted the rest. His feeling was much the same as he had experienced when, for the first time, his uncle had desired his presence at a board meeting. A pleasant sense of being trusted, a self-respecting knowledge of being worthy of it, a grateful recognition of his uncle's generosity, and a somewhat genial glow of added importance, these were the sensations in Harald Bowman's mind as he listened to his uncle's promises given as hostages of even greater benefits. Edith's attitude towards the matter was perfectly proper. Her farewell to her new *fiancé* was very gentle and very kind. She was a girl who gave her father the serene satisfaction of knowing that she would never by a hair's breadth overstep the borders of propriety—no matter how alluring the flowers outside might be. There was no affectation of righteousness in her attitude. She simply could not comprehend that there might be devious ways in life. Morals and manners divided themselves for her, into two tables, between which there was a great gulf fixed. Certain things were admissible, certain things were inadmissible. That was all. Her choice between the two hardly seemed voluntary. A lady's behaviour, she felt, was fixed by birth.

So Harald Bowman left the Surrey house, with

its lawns, its tennis courts, its conservatories and glass houses, and went to live at Farden Ha'.

Farden Ha' had been built whilst yet the handloom weavers reigned supreme in Trailfit. It was originally, that is, since ever local tradition and ancient tax papers bore record of it, a decayed and ruined castle, of which the only history was contained in a few lines in a monkish chronicle; the monastic establishment had completely vanished, but some of its records remained, in one of which the old castle was described as "Ane stronghold of ye Speirs, with foursome toures, a chappelle, and a gret square close." Of this original structure one tower remained standing, heaped against and around it were piles of stones and mortar, petrified as hard as stone itself—these ruinous heaps roughly outlined a great quadrangle.

The two lower storeys in the tower of Farden Ha' had been made habitable for Andrew Gall, a middleman between the weavers and the cotton mills. His legitimate profits could not have been very great, yet he soon bought a ninety-nine years' lease of the ruin and the ground on which it stood. This was remarked upon with surprise, which deepened to amazement, when he brought an army of workmen and set them to build an extraordinarily eccentric structure upon the site, nay, upon the very foundations of the old ruin.

Andrew Gall insisted that the original outline of the castle should be followed, so the masons wrought week after week, month after month, using all the old material lying ready to their hands, uprooting the wall-flowers ruthlessly, and doubtless greatly dis-

turbing the ghosts—for all the parish phantoms were wont to hold high carnival in the old quadrangle among the heaps. The masons in building took no thought for the morrow, but planned their work in accordance with the material; upon the sides of the quadrangle the building was mostly of one storey, but at one corner a superabundance of material gave three storeys at the end next the garden. It was, of course, the caprice of a monomaniac. The old tower was let alone, and through all the clatter of stones and ringing of trowels, the magpies which nested in its ivy came and went indifferently, providing omens of good and evil import for the villagers, who regarded the fantastic structure being reared with the slow regard of weavers' eyes, and opined in the bosoms of their families that "Andra' Gall had a bee in his bonnet," but, as Mrs. Campbell justly said, "That didna' explain whaur he got the fortin' he was pittin' intae that daft-like pile o' stanes." Andrew Gall did not long enjoy his fantastic folly. He had been defrauding the weavers and the mills systematically. He had kept a farthing off every yard of the weavers' webs, and had taken a like sum over and above his righteous commission from the mills.

"Many littles mak' a meikle," says the Scotch proverb. His employers, made suspicious by rumours of his castle building, investigated and discovered his delinquency. The carrier brought the news as he drove into Trailfit from Glasgow in the gloaming; by the time candles were lighted the village was in an uproar. The weavers' deliberated together, and finally Isaac Samson was sent up with a sar-

donically polite message to "Ask out Maister Andra' Gall tae speak wi' the weavers."

Andrew Gall was gone; there remained only his wife ("a shilpit object o' a woman, no' worth havering tae"), his four children, and the two serving girls.

Isaac Samson was fain to content himself with bidding these two girls to "come forth from the house of sin." He said it so solemnly that the two red-cheeked girls fled from the place as Lot fled from Gomorrah, pausing, like Lot's wife, to look back to see if the roof-tree was tottering visibly. But the old tower stood strong and sombre as ever, it had withstood all Heaven's winds for centuries, the puny breath of the weavers' execrations was less to it than the least zephyr which rippled its ivy.

Men came from Glasgow next day and emptied the house, Mrs. Gall departed, nothing was left of Andrew Gall but an evil memory and the misshapen structure which soon came to be known as Farden Ha'—Farthing Hall. No one knew how it got the name, but the applicability of it was so obvious that it fastened upon the place like an evil reputation to a person. Perhaps some old weaver, Kilmarnock nightcap on head, going out to unbar the heavy wooden shutters, said, with a slow sneer to his neighbour similarly occupied, "Div' ye see the jay-pyots at Farden Ha'?" Perchance the name dropped from the lips of urchins playing in the dirt, perhaps the women knitting in the doorways evolved it from their invectives against Andrew Gall. Whatever its genesis, it conveyed well the contemptuous scorn with which the injured weavers viewed the

house. In process of time the weaving died out, coal-dust instead of thrums characterized the streets of Trailfit, the village countenance changed to a grimy one, but the sneer upon it as it turned towards Farden Ha' remained unchanged. Farden Ha' stood empty through all the mutations of the village. There was room for a small colony in it, but Trailfit folk eyed it suspiciously, and averred their disinclination to dwell there even "rent free and wi' the Casseles bank acoont intae the bargain." ("The Casseles bank account" being the local synonym for riches in the concrete.) These terms were never proffered to anyone, and the place remained empty till David Hamilton electrified the village by taking up his abode there. A birdseye view of the structure from the top of the old tower showed an indiscriminate medley of slates and chimney pots. Looked at from the street it presented strikingly the inherent ugliness of inutility; within it was a bewildering succession of rooms, passages, stairs, up and down, and, now and then, dark closets, which were simply spaces unreckoned with in the hit-or-miss methods of its builders. The old tower had rooms to the very top; there were five storeys in the tower, though above the second the stairs were somewhat perilous, still little Davy and Marriotte trod them lightly enough. Indeed the topmost room of all, where a green shoot of ivy had grown in between the stones like an insinuating serpent, was little Davy's special refuge. It was here he fled when his brooding moods came upon him; it was here he watched, fasting, for David's return upon those rare occasions when he was from home; it was here he poured

forth in music the love, turmoil, questioning, and rebellion of his dumb spirit. And often the village women, bending above their washtubs, or bearing pails of water upon wooden yokes across their shoulders, would pause, hearing an angelic strain coming down to them as from high heaven itself, and listen, knowing that up above them, among the ominous magpies of the old haunted tower, the little foundling was playing his violin. More than one, departing from among his friends for ever, had had his dying ears filled with Davy's music, and smiled in the death-grips, believing it to be the Heavenly welcome which, in his own blind way, he had striven to win. Yet, of a truth, in the village eyes, little Davy bore no aspect of a heavenly messenger.

One morning, three years before his marriage, David Hamilton rose, as was his wont, at grey daylight, went to the kitchen, where the great "gather-ing-coal" lay black upon the hearth, took a heavy poker, and with a strong blow or two broke it down, showing that at its heart was a core of fire, preserved thus through the night as great truths are often preserved within a dark mass of superstition. After a blast or two from the nail-studded bellows the fire quickened, David swung round the big black kettle, which hung ready filled upon the crane; by the time he looked out at the morning and got on his shoes the water was boiling; taking a bowl and a horn spoon from a long row upon the table, he went to the *girnol* which stood in the corner, took from it a handful of oatmeal, added a lump of salt, and poured the bowl full of boiling water. He ate it with relish, and was ready for two hours' work

before breakfast. A crude school of cookery, and utterly indefensible from a hygienic point of view, and yet—oatmeal has made the fairest women and bravest men in the world. Every man and woman in the big household would follow David's example when they in turn entered the kitchen. It was a cold bleak morning, with that desolateness which so often succeeds a windy night, and a black frost that nipped the breath ere it left the lips. Before David went to the stable he circled round by the rickyard to see that all was well. The conical-shaped ricks stood cosily together, like houses in a happy hamlet, where want is unknown. As he turned to go through the middle of the stack-yard he stumbled over something. A dead man was lying at his feet, with a child and a violin clasped to his breast. He had given them all the shelter he could—he had loved both well; true, he had given preference to the child, inasmuch as he had enwrapped nearly all his own scanty clothing about him, but he had shared the shelter of his sunken breast equally between the boy and the viol—both had shared the warmth which had passed from his heart for ever.

The parish buried the beggar (for such he seemed), yet, if he was a beggar, he could not have been very importunate in the asking of alms, else he had not died of starvation and cold in a land where beggars fare so well—where, in those days, they had established routes, and frequently took apprentices, where one was heard to grumble discontentedly that "the begging wasna' as good by half-a-crown a day as it was a few years back."

David Hamilton insisted upon keeping the found-

ling, a course greatly deprecated by his people—but he was the eldest son, and had not yet bartered his birthright for a woman.

The little boy, whose plump and well-nourished frame contrasted so eloquently with his father's emaciated body, grew and prospered. Seeming to comprehend from the first that he owed all to David, he gave him all the fierce selfish love of his wild little heart. Very soon the boy came to be known as little Davy. At first he was inconsolable for the loss of his father, sobbing and crying for him with a passion of pleading beyond his years. David, who took charge of him like a mother, soon learned that he could not sleep save within touch of the violin, which, indeed, had been his bed-fellow since babyhood, for both had rested upon the same couch—a man's breast—both had heard the same lullaby—the sobs of a man's weeping—and the violin had crooned to the child and the child had babbled to the violin, and the man had whispered to each the story of his love, his betrayal, his despair; and the child forgot, but the violin, interpenetrated with the anguish of the *maestro*, remembered, and afterwards translated it all, in weird spirit speech which only he could understand, to the boy. Little Davy thrived, growing under the sombre Scotch skies as though the Tuscan sun shone down on him. He had the bold black eyes, the full red lips, glowing cheeks, and curling hair of his race; all the passionate likes and dislikes, the hot hates and love, the facile emotions and fiery impulses; he never forgot an injury, however slight, and always requited it.

He was perhaps twelve years old when David married Marriotte. When David's father sent his son's clothes after him he sent also the foundling. "Tell him," said the old man, with a sneer (and there is nothing more vitriolic than a Scotch sneer), "Tell him tae keep the foundling. He'll do weel wi' the rest o' the gear David's getting. He's a hantle liker the Hoggs nor the Hamiltons! Faith! It'll be a fine gypsy-like hoose yon o' Greenbraes!"

David, naturally, tried sending his charge to school, but it proved a hopeless failure. In the first place the boy was desperately unhappy, growing pale, thin, and languid, under the constraint; in the second place he succeeded in getting himself violently disliked both by teacher and scholars. He frequently disobeyed the former because he could not comprehend at all the why and wherefore of his authority. David's he never questioned, and it is at least one winning trait in the foundling's character that he thought love the basis of all law. When the boys offered him friendly battle by way of tendering him the hospitalities of the school, he fought them with a ferocity never surpassed in any kirk-yard battle; and the young hopefuls of Trailfit took turns at him only to fall before him like grain before the sickle. Thus it was that they looked upon him with the envious dislike which is the portion of an unpopular victor. And little Davy, only half comprehending their speech, and their "ways" not at all, returned their unfriendly gaze with a piteous and uncertain courage in his eyes, and the nervousness of a creature that has been harried almost to distraction.

A certain dame complained to the school-teacher of the beating which the "blackamoor foundling" had given her son. As a matter of fact the young rascal richly deserved his black eye, but the teacher did not seek little Davy's justification too eagerly; the culprit was summoned to the bar of justice, or rather, to the "place of execution"; he was told to hold out his hand, and did so—but his eyes were filmed—his soul was filled that day with a dream of music which held him in melodic thrall. The fire-hardened strap fell once across his palm, the boy grew livid with shock and uncomprehending rage. Someone snickered behind him. With almost a snarl he flung himself at the teacher and buried his teeth in the hand which held the taws; he fought wildly, unreasoningly, knowing only that the strongest hand in the school was raised against him; there is no struggle so desperate as that of an over-matched creature whose back is fairly at the wall. The battle was fierce and brief—for the teacher caught up a heavy slate and felled his assailant with one blow. Not a boy in the benches before him would have done it—they looked at the teacher with detestation upon their dirty impertinent faces.

"Shame!" cried Tam Jamphraes, and fled from the school to summon David Hamilton. Little Davy lay senseless, his face very piteous in its loneliness, the babyhood in it showing plainly; the small delicate hands which he had used so well against the sturdier boys, lay limply, palms upward, on the floor, when David Hamilton, his grey eyes gleaming with wrath, strode through the schoolhouse, and raised him lightly in his arms. A poor beaten little

alien, his inert head the only dark poll amid all these clustered children. With little Davy held close to his breast by one great arm, Hamilton stretched forth the other, caught the teacher by the collar, and shook him as a terrier does a rat, then, dropping him in a heap, turned and left the school—still in silence. Only Tam Jamphraes, near the door, saw a glister in his eyes, which was not all wrath, and heard him whisper to the unconscious child, "My bairn, my bairn!" This Tam never forgot. Certain painful circumstances immediately following served to impress it yet more deeply upon his memory, for such a tempest raged that day in the Trailfit schoolhouse, as had never been known within the memory of the most incorrigible callant in the school.

David took little Davy home to Marriotte, who wept over him, made much of him, held his hand till he fell into a troubled, moaning sleep, and then brought his violin and put it where he would see it when he wakened. After this Marriotte taught Davy, and Hamilton heard him say his lessons, but the teaching was, to say the least, desultory, and indeed little Davy was unlearned all his days. He loved David and Marriotte well; above and beyond all, David, and he alone of all the world had seen David Hamilton when he wrestled with his devil; for curb and crucify it as he would David's denied passion sometimes rose to slay him, armed with all the strength of his manhood, pleading "right" by way of excuse.

David Hamilton was no whining weakling, no hysterical boy, yet often tears burned salt upon his

cheeks, often he cried aloud to the faithful God of his fathers for strength to sustain his renunciation. And from these conflicts he slowly but surely reared the structure of a perfect love; a love which, independent of denial and betrayal, repression and starvation, still lived, and grew into the solemnity of those things which are eternal, ranking, as love was meant to rank, with the stars of heaven, nay, more, with the everlasting purposes of the Unseen. Heaven and earth may pass away, but so long as the idea of Godhead endures the essence of divinity shall not perish—and of such is love.

CHAPTER IV.

HAGGIS SANDY came through the West breathing hate and defiance to all Trailfit.

Mrs. Jamphraes whose nostrils "snuffed up the noise of battle from afar," hung about her door waiting. Haggis Sandy was one of those inconvenient people who remember when sober everything said and done when they are drunk. It was Monday. The preceding Saturday, Haggis Sandy had been "by wi't a'thegither," as the phrase ran. Being Saturday, young Tam Jamphraes was also let loose upon the village, and the drunk mendicant drew him as a magnet does the metal. Haggis Sandy was possessed of a most marvellous memory, which enabled him to repeat *verbatim* anything he had once heard. He utilized this accomplishment by visiting the various churches in the country side, sitting on

the pulpit steps and listening attentively, and whatever clergyman saw him thus, might be sure that during the next week Haggis Sandy would be going his rounds, offering the Reverend So and So's last for threepence, sixpence if he gave the prayers, and ninepence if he sang the psalms. It is regrettable that he was much encouraged in this enterprise, not, alas! because of the godly dissertation, but because of his mimicry of voice and gesture, which was simply marvellous; indeed, it seemed at times as if he altered his very features to fit his rôles. It was a treasure-trove to Haggis Sandy, when he hit upon some clergyman with a personal peculiarity, some trick of talk or mannerism of gesture; like all caricaturists, Sandy exaggerated, but did it so artistically, that the original resemblance was never lost. Of course, it was an unholy thing, yet truth to tell, many sermons were better enjoyed by the roadside than in the kirk. All the old clergymen knew of Sandy, and looked well to their quotations and imagery, when they saw his face upturned from the pulpit stairs, for they knew his unerring faculty for finding mistakes; many young men, fresh from the "devenity," delivered themselves into his hand as they preached at the Casseles pew, and took no heed of the ragged beggar at their side.

Haggis Sandy, knowing his accomplishment to be unique, always held out for his price, and it so happened that Tam Jamphraes had never been at one of his "preachings"—therefore, when the boy found him mellowed with drink upon that memorable Saturday, it occurred to him that he might be more pliable than usual, so he gathered his followers together and

gave them an invitation to the entertainment. Haggis Sandy was in a most vainglorious mood, indeed, Tam's gorge rose at it, and it was only the thought of the preaching without price that restrained him from gibes. He conducted Sandy, with much fulsome praise, to a pulpit improvised of a plank laid across the great barrel of water, kept always full by a trickling pipe, from which the pit engine was supplied. It was in the nature of things to suppose Tam would endeavour to make as much of his materials as possible; he carefully arranged the plank with one end barely across the barrel, then, assuming the rôle of precentor, prepared to enjoy himself, conscious that he was the hero of all the godless youth assembled. Nor did Haggis Sandy prove disappointing. The graceless congregation snickered and applauded, Sandy's caricature became more and more extravagant, his bangs upon an imaginary bible more and more violent, and, just as he reached the peroration of his discourse, the plank slipped, and he went neck-deep in the water. Well might Tam Jamphraes congratulate himself, and offer in the pride of his heart to fight any three of his compeers at once; well might he go about proclaiming that he could "lick his weight in wild-cats and noo and again a tiger," for it was long since Trailfit boys had held such carnival, and to him was the honour and glory. It was the memory of these things which wrought in Haggis Sandy that Monday, as he caught sight of Mrs. Jamphraes. Mrs. Jamphraes was an old campaigner—she knew the strategical value of the charge. She greeted him derisively whilst he was yet afar.

"Ye're fine and clean the day!" said she, "ye maun

hae been takin' a soom, I'm thinking! 'Ods! I never kent ye were sae fond o' the watter!" This address under the circumstances was not calculated to soothe Sandy.

"Puir woman!" said he; "ye're mair tae be peetied than laughed at! I mind weel the first time 'at ever I saw ye! Ye were rinning in the Peasweep Raw wi' yer heid oot at a hole in a gunpouter bag, and yer airms through twa in the sides, and 'pouter' in black prent across yer shouthers. There's no much, tae be expected o' ye—yer ignorance is, in a manner o' speakin', yer misfortin', but it's a peety some freendly body disna 'gie ye a hint tae haud yer tongue!"

"Beggin's fine for learnin' ye dictionar words and shairpening the intelleck"—said Mrs. Jamphraes composedly, though her eye was growing fiery.

"Yes! If there's ony tae work on," interjected Sandy, "it wadna be worth *your* while tae try it!"

"Ay! It taks an intelleck by ordna tae mak' rich honestly at the beggin,'" continued his enemy. "It's no me that tell't ye kened the road tae the plate at the kirk gate!" This was an intorerable taunt.

"If I wis searchin' for an honest man or a decent woman it wouldna' be in Trailfit I'd look," said Sandy, becoming openly abusive. "Ye're a' the same feather! The hale clannjamfrey o' ye! The Trailfit randies are kent up and doon the hale kinty side. 'Hae ye ever been in Trailfit?' I asked a Hielan' drover. 'Na!' says he, '*but I've seen the sheep frae thereaboot!*' that wis eneuch for him! The very sheep are blackened wi' yer pits! Man! It's fine tae be a miner. Ye're aye either in the mune, or the midden! I mind weel at the time o' the big

wages ye couldna' walk Trailfit streets withoot slipping on the grease ye wastefu' drabs flung oot, it wisna' lang afore ye were gangin' frae hoose tae hoose wi' a bit o' meat tied tae a string, dippin' it in ilka ane's pat tae mak the broth, and sendin' roond a garvie in a paper tae show tae the bairns when they ate their tatties!" During the process of this harangue Haggis Sandy had slowly withdrawn, until, with the final phrase he slipped round the corner of the row taking the last word with him, and leaving Mrs. Jamphraes standing in impotent rage upon her doorstep. She had opened the battle, but Haggis Sandy had retired in good order; she could not follow him, for no decent woman left her doorstep to continue an argument, to do so was to lose caste. At this juncture, it was a great relief to Mrs. Jamphraes to see the green cart from which Betty of the Knocken sold buttermilk, approaching, in the spasmodic fashion of a vehicle which is at every one's beck and call. Betty was the tenant of a small holding upon an estate which marched the broad lands of Casseles. Every year her landlord gave a dinner to his tenants over which he presided in person, and every year Betty, resplendent in a purple French merino gown, took her place in the seat at the laird's side. That she was the only woman present troubled her not at all, she was so well used to dealing with these men at tryste and feeing fairs, that she was entirely unembarrassed when, raising her little glass of toddy (always filled from the laird's tumbler) in her hard-wrought old hand, she began her little speech with "Freends and neebors, and you, sir" (with a curtesy). She always got great attention, and for

weeks after, in discussing the dinner, it would be said, "Betty wis in fine fettle at the denner!"

As Betty drew near Mrs. Jamphraes, Harald Bowman crossed the street from the pit road and approached from the opposite direction.

"So, yon's the new manager," said Betty to Mrs. Fairservice, by whose door the cart was momentarily stayed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Fairservice. "What think ye o' him?"

Mrs. Fairservice was always noted for her direct manner of speech. She had been known to answer a "guess" at a tea-party before it was well out of the propounder's mouth—a rude proceeding, tending to discredit the subtlety of the guess and disconcert the giver. It was Mrs. Fairservice who brought her future husband "to the bit," by saying to him, "If ye're gaun tae tak 's, tak 's, if ye're no gaun tae tak 's, tell 's, for there's anither lad has an eye ma way."

But Betty of the Knocken had no idea of delivering herself of a definite opinion or committing herself to any party by avowing her judgment upon the new manager. Betty was a cautious soul, very wise in worldly wisdom; as she said herself, she "didna burn her mooth wi' ither folks' porridge": "clash" and the buttermilk trade would not have thriven together; therefore, though she was a walking encyclopædia of the country-side gossip, no one ever heard her voice in any of the multifarious scandals which emanated from the thickly settled district. It was said, with deprecating regret by her friends and open accusation by her few enemies, that Betty was not "newsy."

It was felt she kept her talent in a napkin. In this instance she replied to Mrs. Fairservice in an oracular phrase which masked its ambiguity by its epigrammatic brevity, and the brown horse, being in close communion with its mistress' moods, drew slowly on to Mrs. Jamphraes' door.

Isobel Telpher crossed the street, and Bowman saluted the trio of women cheerily, as he passed, and stretching forth his hand, patted the sleek brown horse.

The women looked after him approvingly. Trailfit had a good conceit of itself and its belongings. The village had satisfied itself that Bowman did not go lusting after the strange gods of Yondertown as the last manager had done. Had Trailfit possessed a theological chart, Yondertown would have been marked in it as the Land of Baal.

"There's an unco' differ between this ane and Semple," said Isobel to Mrs. Jamphraes.

"Semple!" echoed Mrs. Jamphraes. "He wis jist an impident scart 'at wis he! An upsettin' veesion o' a body wi' hauns like a woman's and nae mair in his heid than the kame could bring oot! I had a scunner at the sicht o' him and I'se warrant he didna like me!"

"This ane wad mak' twa o' Semple," said Betty, still looking after Bowman, reflectively.

"He wis big eneuch in his ain esteem, at ony rate," said Mrs. Jamphraes, who certainly had no need to fear the uncomfortable doom of those who are lukewarm in their professions. "I'm sure the young leddies in Yondertown needna' hae troubled theirsels sae muckle aboot him! There wis Miss Lanishaw!

It wis scunnersome!" Mrs. Jamphraes simulated a shudder of extreme and lady-like disgust.

"She wad tak' Maister Bowman before he asked her twice," said Isobel.

"Maister Bowman!" said Mrs. Jamphraes. "Ma certes! She'd jump at him like a cock at a grossart! But he'll never look the airt she's on!"

"What like is she?" asked Mrs. Telfer. "I havena' seen her since she wis a wee bit lassie on a powney."

"She's a lang-chafed, gey yella ane, sair marked wi' the sma'-pock."

"Sirs! She maun be a beauty! She needna' fash herself wi' oor manager. I can tell her he'll no think twice o' her," said Mrs. Telfer, highly relishing the derogatory description of this daughter of Baal.

"I maun awa'," said Betty. "The gloamin's drawin' on." She drove away up the village street, sitting, a broad figure in a winsey gown and white cap, upon the front of her cart, with her feet resting upon the shaft and the reins hanging loose, while the brown horse held on its well-known way sedately. The hour was solitary and very quiet; the boundaries of the peaceful fields between which she passed were blurred by the impending night, as the lines which separate humanity into castes are blotted out by approaching death.

Betty's dim old eyes had seen many years. Like the Preacher, she had found that one thing befalleth to all—even death; like him too she had realised that the crooked cannot be made straight; many had she welcomed into the world, many had she seen depart; she herself had "lived and loved and

closed the door," and of all her experiences Betty had woven a creed of calm acceptance. She looked back and saw what had been, forward and saw the same in different guise. Her brave old heart knew its own bitterness and applied its measure to the sorrows of others and was thus very merciful. As she passed through the gathering twilight upon her cart she murmured to herself:

"So yon's the new manager. And he's tae leeve at David Hamilton's. It's no wise-like o' David. Yon's a gentleman, and no tae be set doon tae bite and sup wi' plain folk. I wonder at David when he kens as weel as the rest o' us what bluid's in Marriotte!—" Her voice died away, a tear brightened the faded blue of her eyes as dew freshens a faded flower. Marriotte's mother had stolen the one lover of Betty's youth—for she was always hard favoured—stolen him to amuse herself and show her power; when she was done with him the recreant lover came back to Betty and begged to be forgiven. Betty indeed forgave him, but she could not reinstate him. Betty was too true herself to tolerate perfidy in others—she bade him begone as superbly as if she had been bonny and had had suitors to spare. (How well Betty remembered that night of bitterness and tears after he left her!) She had never had another offer; the man's children were long since grown men and women, yet as Betty held on her solitary way the vision of Isaac Strang, as he had been before he played her false, bore her company. As the green cart turned a bend in the road and the horse quickened his steps towards his stable Betty again caught sight of the dark tower of Far-

den Ha'. Broken speech came to her lips: "She's a deal liker the gentleman wi' her white hauns and her low speech than what she's like a hearty man's wife, and Gude guide us! What I think on 't they do favour each ither in their looks, for they're baith black and baith whitely, and the ane's tall and the ither's lang! It'll be a sair day yet tae David Hamilton the day he let yon man intae his hoose. 'Like draws aye tae like,' and they're gypsies baith thae twa . . . puir Marriotte!" There was something very sweet and womanly in the illogical conclusion of Betty's soliloquy. The brown horse broke into a fast trot, for his stable door was in sight, and gaped for him. Betty dismounted nimbly from her perch, gave her horse a passing pat, and a kindly "puir lad!" and entered her quiet house. Night drew its shrouding curtain over the scenes of workaday toil and care. Betty partook of her simple supper, reached down her old leather-bound Bible, and turning to Ecclesiastes, began to read: "Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." Betty closed the book upon her lap . . . "Woe to him that is alone" . . . it was a bitter thought with which to face the darkness—but at length sleep's kindly finger closed the eyelids over Betty's eyes, took her by the hand, as a gentle nurse leads a timid child, and guided her back to youth through the gateway of dreams.

The Trailfit matrons were rarely wrong in their conclusions, however devious might be the processes

by which they reached them. They were quite right in their idea that Bowman did not trouble much about the "Yondertown folk"—Trailfit used the phrase as the Jews employed the word Gentiles; it meant simply all who were not of the chosen people of Trailfit. All the "better people" dwelling in this outer darkness promptly called upon Bowman. The "better people" were those people of substance who were not of the "county." Their leading representatives were men like Banker Lanishaw, Lawyer Greenshields, rich Brewer Lindsay; the parish minister was by virtue of his cloth *persona grata* everywhere, though, truth to tell, the good man was always considerably relieved when Casseles House was closed, for his easy-going good fellowship found it irksome at times to live up to the burden of dignities laid upon him by an invitation to dine at Casseles House.

The men came first to call upon Bowman, and returned, bringing their wives. When Bowman's belongings were unpacked another room next his bed-chamber was furbished up as a sitting-room. Upon the dark mahogany table (which Lizzie Lindsay polished to mirror-like brightness, and tested by making grimaces at her own reflection in it), there stood always a bunch of old-fashioned flowers, brought by Marriotte from her garden; the deep window was curtained with embroidery wrought by Marriotte's busy fingers, the floor was dressed with a beautiful Oriental rug Bowman bought in Glasgow; an adorably purny black kettle hung on a hob by the hearth, giving a gracious and hospitable hint of hot water, from the corner cupboard with the

latticed glass doors Bowman was always able to produce a bottle of whiskey and glass decanters of strange rosy and amber wines which were more seductive to the ladies' palates than the tiny glasses of port or sherry that the manners of that day allowed them (for at that time it was not "as water unto wine," but "as wine unto Scotch whiskey"). Later on an outrageously fat little tea service, running over with the unctuous English rose in *repoussée* was sent from England, and Lizzie Lindsay was wont to bring it in and set it down on the mahogany table in purple solemnity. (When Bowman asked Miss Lanishaw to make the tea, that young lady, consenting, saw in the situation the "shadow of things hoped for.")

Bowman was thus so established that it was quite possible for him to exchange cordialities had he so wished, but he was strangely remiss in availing himself of his opportunities. At "church and market" he was indeed very friendly, but he did not visit much. The impression he created may be expressed perhaps as well by the Lanishaws as anyone else.

Mr. Lanishaw was in the breakfast-room reading his paper, his son home from Glasgow college, with the burden of "the humanities" off his mind for a time, was stretched luxuriously on the sofa, watching his mother and sister as they investigated the state of his linen, which they were unpacking on the floor.

His mother had accumulated his collars, and was proceeding to scrutinize them, when she said, with an affectation of grave dubiety, "You seem to have

got your collars mixed up with someone else's, James! Who is this Mr. Ditto?" The lady's air of tentative exclusiveness was quite delightful—as who should say, "If this Mr. Ditto is not *quite* the thing——" James laughed.

"Why, mother," he said, "he's me. You see, when I marked my collars I just wrote my name on one and 'ditto' on all the others, it was so much less work."

"What a capital thought," said his mother, approvingly. "I have great hopes of your career, James," good Mrs. Lanishaw always took herself seriously; "I wonder if Mr. Bowman is a college man?"

"Why, of course!" responded her daughter (the same whom Mrs. Jamphraes had so graphically described), in a tone which implied Mr. Bowman was all that he should be.

Banker Lanishaw looked up from his paper.

"Mr. Bowman is not so very friendly; he's what I would call a stiff man; now Mr. Semple there *is* a friendly man."

"Mr. Semple doesn't come up to Mr. Bowman's shoulder," said Miss Lanishaw, who had decided in her own mind that Bowman was just the right height for a husband—proportionable to a lady of her inches.

"The mind's the standard of the man," quoted her father, oracularly.

"Yes—but it needs some little body to go with it," said Miss Lanishaw flippantly. This was rather hard upon Mr. Semple (Bowman's predecessor), who, although but a duodecimo edition of his sex, prided himself that he had a "presence" which made up for

the missing inches in perpendicularity, though indeed it is difficult to tell just what height Mr. Semple was in Mr. Semple's estimation; we are all prone to miscalculate our altitude.

Many such *conversations intimes* were held in Yondertown *apropos* of Harald Bowman. The fact was he was becoming strangely identified with the household at Farden Ha'.

When his sitting room was arranged Marriotte asked him, with the shyness which so strangely veiled the exceeding loveliness of her person, if he would not like to have his meals served there.

"O, why no, Mrs. Hamilton!" said he quickly; "O, no! Unless," he added with obvious after-thought, "unless you prefer it—unless I am in the way downstairs?" He awaited her reply with conscious eagerness.

She was standing before him with her head a little down-drooped, her eyes half shaded by the lids which were so infrequently fully raised; as he paused she looked up at him with eyes for once given to his scrutiny; there was a light in them like a sunbeam in a brown woodland pool, a glamour as elusive as the colours of the morning, which change ere one can name them; a smile of frank denial suddenly dispelled the gravity of her face, illuminating certain shadowy dimples, then still without speaking she turned away—he was eloquently and honestly answered. Bowman stood still a moment. His sensation was so strange that he stopped to analyze it. It was certainly delightful to find the expression of his wishes so cordially received. She had evidently been really pleased! It was so good of

her to say—then he remembered that she had said nothing, only her eyes had spoken, and he had understood their speech. Nay—it had even been strangely familiar to him. Sometimes it happens that in mature years we hear a shred of rhyme known in childhood, but which has been so long buried beneath worldly wisdom that we have quite forgotten it; when we hear it again it brings back a host of shadowy illusive feelings which we dare not call recollections, they are so vague, yet which are too eloquent, too poignant, too intimately interwoven with the fabric of our being to be only imaginations. We strive to retain them, clutching eagerly at these simple joys spilled from the careless palms of youth, in vain—they vanish and leave us desolate; we have a sense of their withdrawal and we know that one more of life's little joyous springs has run dry; the recollection which we welcomed joyfully leaves us with a yearning heartache—we are bereft, though we hardly know of what—and this very uncertainty forbids that we shall ever regain what we have lost.

The glimpse of Marriotte Hamilton's eyes produced this effect upon Bowman. It was as if he saw a vague glimmer of light from a place from which he was barred out.

That night Harald Bowman deliberately set snares to entrap once more his boyish dreams with all their golden abstractions, he could not. He felt a deep sense of loss—had these visions departed for ever? He fancied the wind wailed eerily about the house. He thought of his mother and the poverty in which she died, remembering how the pine of her cheap coffin had shown quite plainly through the stain.

He experienced again the terrible sense of isolation and loneliness which had overwhelmed him as he stood by his mother's coffin-head with the immutability of her silence coming home to his childish heart; of all the visions of his boyhood—this alone was vouchsafed to him.

It is barely possible that David Hamilton might have felt a little relieved if Bowman had elected to accept Marriotte's offer about his meals, but all the irksomeness of Bowman's presence soon wore away if indeed it ever existed, for Hamilton was in no degree troubled with self-consciousness. His devotion to his wife, his lover-like attention to her small wants, seemed less marked in contrast with Bowman's courteousness than it would have in any company of their friends. Indeed, during those days Hamilton showed his great tenderness for Marriotte more than he had ever done before, for Bowman had a certain reverence in his regard, a certain real instinct behind the forms of his politeness, which created an atmosphere sympathetic to the situation.

To one member of the Farden Ha' household Bowman's presence was abhorrent. A certain incident converted the foundling's unreasoning prejudice into virulent hatred; incidentally too it showed Bowman that beneath the gentle gravity of Marriotte's manner there was a depth of pride and passion which only needed a spark to set it aflame. If she bore herself meekly it was not because there was pale blood at her heart.

Bowman lingering about the great living room one day espied in a dim corner a table which proved

to be heaped with little Davy's treasures. Two or three dusty school books, with paper covers fastened at the corners with shoemaker's wax, a sling cunningly contrived of leather and elastic (with which Davy could kill birds on the wing), a bag of marbles with which he played solitary games of "knuckle doon," certain twisted brass wires, suspiciously like snares, with other things of a like nature heaped into a sort of altar, upon which lay a violin with its bow beside it. Such a violin! One of those magnificent instruments which rightly rank among the most perfect achievements of artistic genius. From whatever point it was viewed the beautiful varnish focussed itself to the eye into an aureate centre, from which ripples and waves of light broke smoothly over the suave curves.

Bowman had a friend in London, the greatest violinist of his day; from him he had learned to recognize and appreciate the beauties of the instrument before him. He caught it up eagerly, exclaiming aloud, as he saw the precious label, yellowed with age, yet still intact, still bearing quite legibly the signature of the master, "*Ant'n Stradivari, 1720,*" in the characteristic scrawl known in facsimile to all lovers of the violin—and the date, when Antony Stradivarius had reached the golden era of his genius, when he had thrown aside all imitation of his teacher Nicholas Amati, and had given to the world the perfected results of his own endless experiments. The exquisite and symmetrical arching of the instrument, the beautiful carving of the scroll, the *f* holes, which set the model for all the world, the cunning purfling which serves as a hem to keep the delicate

structure together, the purity of the outline, the rich varnish, with its unapproachable texture—all these things Bowman noted, and knew that he held a small fortune in his hands. He fell into a reverie, in which he seemed to see the tall thin figure of the great Stradivarius, with his cap of white wool, and his dainty work-apron of white leather, bent above his bench, in that dusky little shop where by an infinitude of pains he succeeded in making a logical combination of materials to give a perfect result; delicate deal for the belly, maple for the back plate, and sallow, the lightest of all woods, for the side; where too he wrought out the delicate whorls and perforations of the bridge so cunningly that the slightest variation in any one detail mars the perfection of the tone. Bowman remembered how the old Italian makers were wont to use the maple oars which were sent from Croatia for the galleys of Venice, and how Stradivarius got his deal from the southern side of the mountains of Tyrol, and as he stood thus, his idle dream lighted by the soft glow of the violin, little Davy entered the room, paused a moment quivering with wrath, with something of the air of an animal about to spring, then, going forward, he held out his grimy hand for the violin, his face pale, his eyes blazing.

"Give—give!" he stuttered out, almost inarticulate with rage. Bowman saw he had profaned a shrine, but somehow the boy's worship of his God did not touch him. He laid down the violin and turned away coldly. But the thought of the treasure lingered with him all day long; it was, of course, one of those splendid instruments made by the master

to the order of noble patrons, of which, save of a very few, all trace has been lost. Bowman's discovery lent a certain glamour of romance to the circumstances of his life in this great gaunt house, vaguely suggesting a sequence of interesting possibilities.

It was a very natural thing that Bowman should that evening write to his friend the violinist, giving him an account of his "find." In three days the violinist arrived in Trailfit.

Marriotte directed him to the pit where Bowman was surveying; the latter was surprised, and not a little self-reproachful, when he saw his friend. He realized that to him such a violin was more than a mere musical instrument, it was the Holy Grail of his cult. Bowman had an unpleasant premonition that his friend had come upon a useless errand, for he felt David would not sell the foundling's violin, but he could see no great objection to making the proposition. The two men went back to Farden Ha'; the stranger's impatience was such that he could hardly wait whilst Bowman explained to Marriotte that his friend had come all the way from London to see Davy's violin. Marriotte rose from her embroidery, with her customary gracious shyness, and brought the violin. The musician took it with hands which trembled, and after an ecstatic caress or two swept the bow athwart the strings and began to play, his face enraptured with delight. The violin, wont to respond to Davy's wild moods, answered from its depths the more sophisticated appeal of the stranger. An inexplicable circumstance attended upon this trial of the violin. David Hamilton was

gone that afternoon to look at some fallen timber on the Casseles estate, which the factor wished to sell Bowman for props in the mine. He had taken little Davy with him. Just at the moment when the stranger in Farden Ha' drew his bow across the strings, Davy whitened to the lips, gave a cry of "The fiddle! the fiddle!!" and setting his face to Trailfit, ran like a hunted hare for home—which was two long Scotch miles away. He reached the village in an incredibly short time, passed through the streets a white-faced, stricken creature, and was at Farden Ha' ere David Hamilton was half way. Davy burst breathlessly into the room, saw the strange bearded man playing, Bowman, listening, half sitting on the table, and Marriotte, with hands idle in her lap, looking unseeingly into space. Davy fled to Marriotte, fell upon the floor, and buried his face in her skirts, which he clutched with both hands. He had no power of speech left, he had run so quickly that his over-taxed lungs seemed on fire—as children say, he had "lost his breath," he was most piteous in his mute distress. Marriotte caressed his curly head with tender hands, and whispered to him, "Hush ye—hush ye, Davy! It's a grand London gentleman come all the way from England to see your violin, and he says there's not its equal anywhere. Think of that, Davy! He will not hurt it; see, he loves it too!" Indeed, the musician, suddenly overcome by his own music given forth from this unrivalled violin, suddenly paused and kissed it.

"What will you take for it, Mrs. Hamilton?" he asked. "Where is your husband? I will give any-

thing in reason or out of it. I'll have it valued in London, if you like, upon condition that you let me purchase it. How much do you think now you would take? Bowman, tell Mrs. Hamilton what it is worth! Can I take it to-night?"

Little Davy fell into an agony; he pressed his face close and hard against Marriotte's soft side, he was suddenly shaken with convulsive sobs. She placed her arm about him and drew him closer.

"We will not sell the fiddle for any sum," she said clearly (that little Davy might understand). "Please do not speak of it, it belongs to Davy here. We would not dream of selling it."

The musician tossed back his hair impatiently.

"What need has a foundling boy of a violin like that? I am willing to give any price. I must have it."

His insistence angered Marriotte.

"I am very sorry," she began, coldly; "it is not possible. What! Would you really take it from the boy? Do you not see his heart is breaking over it already?"

Bowman gave an uneasy laugh.

"You must not press the matter, Henri!"

"Press the matter!" said his friend, almost bitterly. At that moment Hamilton entered, and stood looking at their disturbed faces with some astonishment.

"This is Mr. Hamilton"—said Bowman—"my friend, Mr. Henri Roche, the great violinist." David made some acknowledgment of the introduction, but Roche could think of nothing but his object.

"Here is a matchless violin, Mr. Hamilton," he said. "It cannot be worth as much to you as it is

to me, yet I am willing to set its price by my valuation, or if you will name any sum——”

Marriotte rose, little Davy still clinging to her; a rich indignant colour flooded her face, giving her a curious sumptuous charm which took Bowman by complete surprise; her great eyes were widely enough opened now and full of astonished anger, her small head poised itself upon its stem with an almost serpentine grace—drawn back—instinct with vivid life—her pose was such as an insulted Diana might take. She stood thus for an instant, straight as a dart, then swept her eyes round to her husband.

“David!” she said, the thrilling appeal in her voice made Bowman’s veins tingle as they had tingled before to the sound of a trumpet, and he, listening, realized what, under certain circumstances, it might mean.

“David, the gentleman has asked me if we would sell the fiddle, and I have said ‘No—It is Davy’s.’” A swift change overspread Hamilton’s face, his grey eyes grew very cold and hard, his square jaw set—his usually cheery voice sounded harsh indeed as he said:

“Then there is surely no need of further speech about it.”

“Look at poor Davy!” cried Marriotte.

“My fiddle!” said Davy, breaking silence for the first time.

David took a stride or two across the room, lifted the fiddle and its bow.

“Here,” he said briefly to Davy. The boy clutched his treasure with a cry of delight, and fled.

Marriotte turned and left the room. She was only

a girl, poor thing! and she chose to think she had been grievously insulted in her own house.

David stood his ground gravely. Bowman plunged into the breach.

"I am afraid we have offended Mrs. Hamilton. It was all a misunderstanding. I am very sorry. My friend here is going back to England to-morrow morning. I will see him as far as Glasgow on his way to-night."

Hamilton's face had regained its normal expression.

"Your friend is making but a short stay," he said.

Bowman asked both to come up to his room for a glass of whiskey. Hamilton declined, so the other two men left him, and the awkward situation was at an end.

As Bowman passed and repassed the window getting out the whiskey and glasses, he saw Marriotte and David in the garden. Her hand was laid in one of her husband's broad palms, and he was patting it reassuringly, a red glow yet dyed her cheeks, and her head was proudly poised. Presently Hamilton left her, going back to his work.

As Bowman and Henri Roche left the house they heard the strains of the violin. Little Davy was playing in the topmost chamber of the tower, and the music which came down to them was the same that Roche had played whilst Davy knelt, his face hidden in Marriotte's gown—but so glorified was it, so transfigured by the illumination of Davy's strange power as to be almost intolerably beautiful. No acquired technique could equal that inborn virtuosity.

"Good God!" groaned Roche, in a tone of mingled wonder and despair. "How marvellous!"

"The violin, or the player?" asked Bowman.

"Both, by God, both!"

As they passed the pits on the way to the station, Bowman left his friend for a moment. He hurried into the engine house, where David was at his post.

"As I said, I am going to Glasgow, but only till the morning," he said, hurriedly. "Will you say to Mrs. Hamilton I'm sorry Roche forgot himself? I hope she don't blame me! I—these musicians are so unreasonable!"

"Yes. There are more little Davys than one!" said Hamilton, with a suspicion of dry humour in his tone, then more heartily, "Indeed, my wife does not blame you! She was saying in the garden that she hoped you were not angry."

"I!" said Bowman; "but I must be off. Be sure you tell her," he finished, boyishly, then he hastened after his friend.

After the departure of Bowman and his friend, Marriotte Hamilton spent an unusually idle afternoon, for the most part pacing back and forth between the prim rows of her humble flowers.

The music of the stranger had been distinctly disturbing. It was said of Henri Roche's music that its eloquence was almost shameful. Like all great art its appeal was addressed to the primary and most vital impulses of humanity, and Marriotte's nature responded to it, so that she felt, as it were, the stirrings of wings throughout her whole being; the

incident of the violinist's visit marked a distinct epoch in the life of Marriotte Hamilton, for of his music was born the first tremor of emotional self-consciousness that she had ever known.

But as she walked in her garden her troubled spirit calmed itself, for the leaves and flowers about her comforted her. She had that great love for plants which perceives instinctively the whole poetry of growth, which, in a peculiarly subtle manner, shares the impetus of the aspiring stem, the ecstasy of the perfected blossom; it gave her a sense of actual physical well-being to see the broad green leaves of the water weeds sucking in the sunshine. Ofttimes going out into those "growing" mornings, which are peculiar to the Scotch climate, the sense of life in the air, of invisible energy in the elements about her, set her all athrill. Her delicate organism was keenly alive to nature's most subtle processes, she had that receptiveness which permits impressions to sink deeply. Indeed, she was so perfectly attuned to nature, so fully in accord with its manifestations, that it might be supposed she would be more swayed by natural impulses than by cold reason, and yet they say, "Nature never yet betrayed the heart that loved her!"

CHAPTER V.

"Her flower-soft lips were meek and passionate,
For love upon them like a shadow sate
Patient, a foreseen vision of sweet things ;
A dream with eyes fast shut and plumeless wings
That knew not what man's love or life should be."

IT was perhaps natural that the figure of Marriotte Hamilton should occupy the foreground in Bowman's imaginative visions at this time. She had much beauty ; his first impression of it, instead of being modified, had deepened. Hers was not a beauty depending upon mere accidentals of tint or expression ; it was of that higher order, which, however perfect, expresses less than it suggests. Unconscious of its own meanings as a statue of its curves it was yet a revelation, but a revelation in a subtle anaglyph, which only the initiate might read. Its subtlety was whip and spur to the natural curiosity of man—that curiosity which is the genesis of all love.

There was a certain intensity about the individuality of this humble woman, which made itself felt in some wholly inexplicable way, an effect produced without her own volition, for she herself was wholly unconscious of it.

Moreover, Bowman saw plainly that whilst she exercised a very definite influence upon the people

about her, they in no way controlled her moods; not that she was unsympathetic, far from that; but her kindness was rather the spontaneous expression of her own generous nature than a response to special appeals; she gave generously, but she got nothing back. One day it came to Bowman with a sense of shock that she was inexpressibly solitary, there seemed to be absolutely no *rapport* between herself and the circumstances of her life. As she went down the village street, exchanging greetings with the women, or pausing to speak to a child, she was a thing apart, no ties of mutual sympathy made invisible bonds between her and those among whom she walked. Lonely, like a mortal astray amid the shades, or a *revenante* wandering in the workaday world, she came and went; it struck Bowman she would have been less alone on a hilltop or amid the timorous wild creatures which hide in the heather. His imagination having once struck this painful note, dwelt upon it; as she sat busy, but very quiet, evening after evening, he fancifully likened her to some hunted creature which, confused by many runnings to and fro, stops, quivering, in one place; he had once seen a mouse pause thus in full view of its pursuers, trembling, but passive, beneath the hand raised to strike, yet there was a courage in Marriotte's eyes, a glow of fire beneath the calm, that suggested she might dare give battle to fate itself.

She bent so persistently above the embroidery frame that Bowman began to regard the brilliant web as an inseparable part of her personal environment, and herself as a humble Lady of Shalott, over whose head hung the menace of a vague curse

should she cease weaving; he wondered what reflection of himself the mirror of her imagination gave back; if, like Tennyson's "faery ladye" she ever grew "half sick of shadows"; if the final curse of unrequited love would ever overtake her—but, of course, there was her husband, David Hamilton, whom Bowman was coming to regard as the best man he had ever known. During all the months of Bowman's life at Farden Ha' (for the summer was ripening now), he had never once surprised the love-light in Marriotte Hamilton's eyes as they turned towards her husband; passionate gratitude he had seen, appeal, girlish deprecation, but never that look which a woman consecrates to the man she loves. Bowman thought there was something wonderfully delicate in this reticence.

We are told, in one of those sweet Persian stories, of a people of Armenia who did not die. For upon some feast day, when universal rejoicing prevailed, some of them would suddenly pause in laugh or jest, game or feast, and without saluting their friends, journey forth from them, disappearing in the west. The mysterious summons was heard alone by those who were to obey, and alone they obeyed its mandate. No one knew whither they went, the reason of their going, nor who summoned them, until such time as they too heard the untranslatable message, and followed the beckoning wing, seen only by those to whom it waved.

It is thus our hearts leave us, taking no farewell—going unawares.

Sometimes we are bewildered by a sense of loss we do not comprehend. Sometimes we do not know

our heart has gone from us till we seek to bestow it ourselves, and find it is no longer in our gift. The old Armenians looked to find their friends again, transfigured in some happy country of re-union. We too find our hearts—sometimes in happy meadows, watered by springs of sweet content, sometimes in perilous places, where grow forbidden fruits and sweet scarlet blossoms of deadly perfume, which men call sins—and wherever we find our heart there we enter in and abide.

During these months when Bowman was giving free rein to his imaginations, his outward life had been one of intense practical application. It was a common saying, worthy of all acceptance, that the manager of the Trailfit mines "didna' rule wi' baith ease and honour." Certainly, the honours of such a position had to be fought for—but then they were not barren.

The miners had had many grievances; chief among them being the use of old trucks, which were so sprung from long use that each held considerably more than the original and stipulated quantity of coal; the loss to the men, and the corresponding gain to the management, mounted up wonderfully in the course of a year. The former management had insisted also on keeping a certain amount of the men's wages "in hand," alleging various benevolent reasons for so doing—this was a continual source of irritation to the men and their wives, who were quick to rebel against making compulsory deposits in a bank which paid no interest—the miners earned their money—they wanted the fingering of it. Then, too, the "Tommy-shops," as the miners contemptuously

called them, had been established. These were simply shops established by the management, in which miners were expected to spend their wages. Certainly no compulsion of a direct kind was used, but various strange coincidences had served to point the moral of the situation, which was that the miner who did not send his wife to the Tommy-shop was apt to find himself very unpopular with the manager. These grievances had been redressed, but a system of discipline had been inaugurated, the like of which was unknown in all Scotland. Nor did Bowman flinch from bearing the brunt of any discontent begotten by his changes. He did not send messages to the men through the foremen, he called the miners together, and told them in brief but very decisive words what he intended doing. He made no pretence that the management was a benevolent society with charitable intentions towards the men. He put the necessary changes before them, took it for granted that he would have their co-operation, neither threatened nor made promises, and left them rather bewildered. The Trailfit miners were not accustomed to be taken for granted. They were accustomed to have their prejudices handled with gloves, and at long reach, and, lo! here was a man ready, it seemed, to meet them and their perennial grievances at close quarters. It was not exactly a case of those coming to brawl remaining to pray, but judgment upon the new manager was, at least, suspended. There were, of course, certain surly spirits who grumbled, men whose chief aim in life was to breed discord. These men are found in every mining district, in every manufac-

turing town, they are the visible leaven of unrest, which permeates all bodies of men tied to the one spot by necessity, the nomadic instinct denied expression in wandering seems to find it in discontent. This disagreeable cult has its prophets in the professional agitators, whose progress, like that of any other plague, may be traced from village to village, from district to district.

The systematic inspection of lamps, the most stringent rules against matches in the pit, the exaction of reports from the foremen, the rigid adhesion to the rules about propping, and the watering of dusty ways, all these things were irksome to the miners, accustomed to the hit-or-miss methods of the past. Your miner is a curious combination, representing what he considers over-precaution for his safety as bitterly as neglect of it. The Trailfit mines were known to be fiery—there had been one ghastly accident at the first workings—men in Trailfit still remembered the procession of hearses which bore the poor fragments of fifty of their fellow men to a common grave; yet the men grumbled at the watering of the passages, though they knew the dust fed the fatal flame of explosion, and made a medium to carry it through and through the workings. They swore at the stringent system of bratticing, and regarded the lamp inspection as rank imposition. It had been considered a great joke formerly to set fire to a fluff of gas under the nose of a comrade, who never grudged eyebrows in such a good cause—the horrible risk seemed to give flavour to the jest. Danger and death do not wear the same aspect to men underground.

Bowman's opinion of this amusement had been expressed in terms sufficiently forcible for even Trailfit ears. He was in nowise mealy-mouthed in talking to his men. Sometimes, indeed, his language to them was not quite irreproachable, but the most suitable words to use upon any occasion, or under any circumstances, are those which produce the effect desired. A remark to a Trailfit miner required to be fire-hardened before there was hope of it penetrating. When Bowman assured Jock Telpher, one of the most contumacious of the younger miners, that he would go to a certain sultry spot soon enough without carrying an unprotected lamp down the pit to light his way thither, Jock grinned, and felt the appositeness of the remark.

When Pait, who had an inborn objection to putting in the obligatory props in his working, was told by the manager that it was a matter of supreme indifference how soon he went to his reward (which he was assured, *en passant*, would have brimstone in it), but that the blocking up of a passage by a fall of the roof on him was a matter of consequence, and, therefore, to be avoided, he chuckled, and took his damning in good part, repeating the circumstance over and over again, at each repetition giving it an additional garnish of oaths. The Trailfit miners had no desire to be whined over.

When some of the shifts got extra drunk, and afterwards stayed at home threatening to say such and such things when they "got their time," which under the new *régime* they fancied would be inevitable, Bowman went round to them personally, advised them to stick their heads in pails of water,

get back to their work, and try to make up for their lost time. He finished by a spicy exhortation to the effect that they might drink till all was blue, only they must turn out for work, for he wanted a certain tale of coal, and *that* he would have, "sore heads or no sore heads," he added, and departed.

These were not, of course, missionary efforts, but then Bowman was not a missionary, but a colliery manager, and the methods of these two *métiers* cannot be successfully interchanged. Moreover Bowman's method, if not avowedly evangelistic, was certainly regenerative. It gradually dawned upon the miners that their manager had the same regard for them that a stern disciplinarian has for the soldiers who fight under him; they reciprocated it in such fashion that they played none of the pranks about the pits with which they had enlivened existence in Semple's time; true, they had their fun, but they sought it elsewhere, and hence it was that Bowman was now and then called to testify to the good behaviour of his miners to refute charges of raising disturbances in Goosedubs, the Clachan, or some other of the neighbouring villages. A circumstance which gave rise to the taunt that "when Trailfit could neither fecht nor flee it got its Englishy tae sweir it aff!" to which the Trailfit partisans responded pertinently that "Trailfit wanted nae mair oot o' Goosedubs' skin than it could tak' wi' its fists," or that "Trailfit fists were mair than a match for the Clachan 'fiscals'"—which contemptuous epithet was understood to embrace the whole machinery of the law called in play when the burghers of The Clachan sought legal redress.

Bowman's miners, like Claverhouse's lambs, were a sturdy set, and it is barely possible, considering Bowman was a man of like passions with themselves, that he took a sneaking pride in their prowess. He certainly had a great contempt for the alien villages which stood upon their legal rights instead of putting their backs to the wall and fighting it out; and it was known that when Goosedubs and The Clachan joined forces and came down upon Trailfit, the manager organized the defence. Nay, it was whispered that he himself did not hide his hand in his bosom. And certain of the invaders suffered sorely from unexpected blows in unexpected quarters, delivered with great precision and energy by someone whom they could never properly identify. Never had Bowman been so well liked as he was the day after the battle, when a strangely coincident contusion adorned his face. There was much rejoicing that day in Trailfit, though there were black eyes and sore bones in every house—who grudges the price of a triumph?—and all day long Trailfit buzzed with self-gratulation, and told with glee how “douce David Hamilton” had been posted in the narrow causeway between the main street and The West, and how those who tried to pass were invariably content with one essay. It will be seen Bowman had his full share of healthy paganism. If the miners had been slow in recognizing the benefit of Bowman's precautions, their women were not. For these women the pits held all possibilities of good and evil. Their nightmares were all of accidents in the pits, a horror greater than any their dreaming imagination could conjure up. Never a woman of them all but paused in

her work from time to time, went to the door, and looked forth to where the two great hideous piles of "waste" marked the pit-mouth. Never one of them heard an unusually heavy cart but her heart leaped, for in the dusky roadways and dim caverns, in the black recesses of the lowering roof of the pit, in the fissures of the seam, they knew the demon fire damp lurked, that inexorable spectre of fire and flame and death. There is no single aspect of life so strikingly illustrative of the old story of Damocles as that of the bent-backed miners toiling surrounded by the impalpable menace of the death-dealing gas. One December day (it was the twelfth of December, 1866), three hundred and seventy-one men and boys of Yorkshire perished in one pit—such possibilities as this hover over every mining village.

No wonder that the Trailfit women filled every interval in their day with garrulous small talk, no wonder their voices were over high, their laughter over loud, their anger always ready to flare up like tow. The circumstances of their existence were not such as breed phlegmatic temperaments; no wonder they were mercurial, or, as Haggis Sandy's inelegant metaphor put it, "Either in the mune or the midden"; no wonder an extra windfall of good wages tempted them to sporadic extravagances; no wonder they were notoriously improvident, their to-morrows were not sure enough to make them pinch to prepare for them.

When a full-blown agitator visited the village, he was allowed to go through the streets in a silence which puzzled him, accustomed as he was to a warmer welcome from the people he deluded. He

went to the pit mouth, and as the men came up, harangued them, they paused to listen; many of the women too had drawn near and stood unobserved upon the outskirts of the crowd. Bowman had been down the pit, and as he came up in the cage the demagogue became more eloquent. Bowman was passing him in contemptuous silence, and had gone a few yards, when the orator, wishing above all to provoke a personal argument, uttered a sneering personal remark upon Bowman, the latter turned like a flash, but someone was before him. David Hamilton had been standing within arm's length of the speaker, his grey eyes growing harder and harder; as the taunt at Bowman left the speaker's lips he felt a mighty hand upon his collar—he was plucked from his place as a weed is uprooted, and next moment was spluttering in the big hogshead of water (the same which had served as Haggis Sandy's pulpit). He scrambled out, his mouth full of oily water and oaths, and was about to appeal to the men, when the women, with Mrs. Jamphraes at their head, were upon him. They tore the clothes nearly off his back before he wrenched himself free, and took to his heels, tattered, and streaming with water; a dozen women, and as many boys, hunted him through the village, with the men's laughter to spur them on. Never again did that agitator set foot in Trailfit; he shook the dust, or rather the water, off as a testimony against it, and went upon his way, but his "usefulness" in that district was gone for ever, for he could not even pass through the streets of Goose-dubs without being saluted by cries of "The hoonds and the hare are oot to-day, and here's the hare

come tae hide." Such is the treatment accorded to those who "work for the people!"

"Him and his impidence!" said Mrs. Jamphraes. "He'll come wi' his ill-tongue tae Trailfit, will he? Wis there no a lump o' waste ye could fling at him, Jamphraes? The ugly scarricraw, takkin' the manager's name in his mooth the same 's he wis fit tae black his shoon! Ma certes! He's gleg wi' his tongue, but I'se warrant he can rin quicker than he can gab!" The words of this virtuous matron found an echo in every womanly breast in Trailfit.

Strictly in line with the practical side of Bowman's life was his correspondence with his cousin Edith. His letters to her were temperate, friendly epistles, such as might be read aloud at the breakfast-table, without embarrassment to Edith or her father. No one would have been so surprised as Edith if he had written in any other style. She did not go in for what she contemptuously called "heroics" any more than she went in for revival meetings at the dissenting chapel.

Extravagant phrasing of any sort was abhorrent to her. She deprecated extremes, and could no more imagine herself hating anyone than she could imagine herself going down a rope-ladder to a man's arms. There was something excessively indelicate, she thought, in the love songs and love plays—indelicate, unnecessary and unreal—for her tepid bosom had known no such disturbances as they portrayed, and her vision was bounded always by the little circumstances of her own perfections.

She was one of those thoroughly well brought up girls, of lukewarm affections and strong principles,

who make such excellent wives and mothers, but who are not precisely intoxicating as sweethearts. She regarded her engagement with placid satisfaction, it seemed to her quite the best arrangement for everyone concerned. She was not at all *exigeante*—exaction always signifies uncertainty in regard to one's power. Edith had none. Her sleek blonde head held no ideal of womanly excellence higher than her own, if it had she would have bestirred herself to reach it, for she was a conscientious little soul, according to the illumination which had been vouchsafed to her. It was quite out of her power to imagine any man treating such a treasure as herself lightly. It is mean to chronicle the fact, yet it must be told, that Edith had inherited her father's mathematical mind, in so far that she was enabled to estimate, very accurately, the potentiality of a dowry like hers. She smiled disdainfully when she heard of the Brewer's daughter who was to receive her weight in gold on her wedding day. Edith was a plump little partridge, but she knew her dowry would outscale her avoirdupois. The conflict of hopes and fears never muddled the clear stream of her self-content—its waters were too still to be sparkling. Old Harald Bowman, listening to the tepid effusions of his nephew, congratulated himself greatly upon his decision regarding the cousins. The old man had a holy horror of "flowery language," he remembered with a shudder the ardent epistles he had read, when his sister's love letters were confiscated. To his mind, instability and passionate declarations were synonyms. Of course, neither Edith nor her father dreamed that after writing such eminently "sensible" letters to his

fiancée, Harald would sit for hours inditing halting love verses to an immaterial and imaginary She—but so it was; there are many bulbs which gardeners plant and put away in the dark to form roots. When they are brought to the sunlight, the stem rises, the leaves appear, the buds break and blossom almost immediately—so it was with the germ of romance in Bowman's nature—it had been implanted deep in his being, its roots had grown unseen, but strong—given the new environment of his life in Scotland, it was ready to spring up in a night like the bean stalk of nursery tradition; who could guess what manner of blossom it would bring forth? Perchance, a passion flower which bears the semblance to a crown of thorns, perhaps a strange blossom, beautiful in hue, sweet of scent, but with poisonous honey at the heart.

One evening Bowman entered Trailfit with the pleasant sense of one nearing home and welcome. He had been for a long tramp across the moor to the hills that day, and had come back with something of nature's serenity in his soul. He had met no one but the shepherd of Bog-end, who with his collie was herding sheep in a green valley between two hills; a loosely jointed man with speculative eyes, very wise in the ways of sheep, very innocent of worldly wisdom. It seemed to Bowman that his light crystalline eyes had something in them of mild sheep-like docility and trust, as of one who has long followed a good shepherd. Bowman was standing, looking down upon a panoramic view of the country. Trailfit, so important in its own estimation, so wise in its own conceit, was only distinguishable from Goosedubs, The Clachan, and half-a-dozen other

villages by the dark mass of Farden Ha'. Its Miners' rows, its heaps of waste, were identical with those of its neighbours; surely Trailfit had never looked at itself from the hill, else its self-sufficiency would have been gone. To the birds of the air, Goosedubs and Trailfit must be on a par—how strange! But so it is in everything. Our own mirrors show us subtleties of beauty, excellencies of person, which an impartial stranger does not discern, we are conscious of many virtues which our daily lives do not manifest.

"Ye'll be looking at the toor o' Farden Ha'?" said the shepherd's voice at his elbow. It was a tentative voice. The speaker evidently being accustomed to consume his own thoughts, rather than express them.

"Yes," said Bowman, "I was. It is an old landmark."

"Ye may weel say it!" said the shepherd. "It's an auld, auld heap o' stanes. Their heids are no sair that built yon toor!"

"No," said Bowman half dreamily—"No—neither their heads nor their hearts are sore to-day."

"I dinna ken for that," said the shepherd. "There's a grave differ atween an aching heid and an aching hert—I'm no sae sure that hert pain and hert joy stops wi' the breath."

"Let us hope so," said Bowman, with energy.

"It's no 'a matter o' choice," said the shepherd—they stood a little while side by side—both silent—then the shepherd took a step or two, and Bowman moved away; there was no more speech between them, yet each felt it had been a pleasant meeting. The shepherd understood the hills upon which he

dwelt, Bowman felt their spell, this mood was a sufficient communication without speech. Long afterward the shepherd spoke of Bowman, his words were few, but it seemed he had known him well.

As Bowman passed through the village, the scene was much the same as it had been the first night of his arrival. Tam Jamphraes was fighting it out silently, but valiantly, with Guthrie Fairservice. Their mothers were within hearing—hence the silence, a tacit honour forbade any sound likely to cause a stop to be put to the festivities. The schoolmaster was authority for the statement, that he never looked out of his window but he saw "Tam Jamphraes either getting his licks or giving them to somebody."

The children were playing a round game, singing lustily—

"I wad na' marry an auld wife,
An auld wife, an auld wife,
I wad na' marry an auld wife,
Although she were ma granny!"

which meant that they would not have an auld wife at any price, for what a Trailfit boy would not do for his granny, he would do for no living soul. The Trailfit mothers were both devoted and sacrificing, but they had little time for tenderesses; besides a Trailfit child was never long a baby, for there was always one younger; but Time, that cunning necromancer, who does his tricks with men and women, juggles with yellow heads and makes them grey, and before our eyes changes raven locks to silver, so wrought with these Spartan mothers, that imperceptibly they became grannies, and, too feeble to toil

arduously, found recompence for past pain in being able to pour out upon their grand-babies the hoard of tenderness which they had not had time to dispense before, but which in the coffers of their wholesome womanly hearts had increased at compound interest, so that there was plenty and to spare for the unhappy bairns who had no grannies of their own. It is safe to guess that the idea of the Trailfit child in regard to the angels was not concerned with white-robed figures with floating hair and golden harps, but rather with stooped figures, about whose bent shoulders were tightly drawn three-cornered shawls of Tartan, with smooth scant locks beneath a cap, and hands, very gentle, but tremulous with age, and hard with toil. These were the visioned angels of the Trailfit child—the granny made immortal.

CHAPTER VI.

“And Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life—the human heart.”

HONEST Lizzie Lindsay was the strong connecting link between the village and Farden Ha', and she made it her business to keep her mistress informed of all the village “clash.” Owing to her proud position as serving-lass in the house which sheltered the manager, Lizzie was a much sought after personage when she sallied forth, basket on arm, for “messages” from the stores. Being an astute lass, and

well aware of the value of her information, Lizzie took care that she got full payment in kind for any crumbs she doled out.

One day Lizzie, returning from an excursion down the street, announced that Isaac Strang's eldest daughter had sent "to borrow Buchan" from the schoolmaster.

When anyone in Trailfit, or the district about it, fell ill the first step was to administer a hot foot-bath, whiskey toddy, and a mountain of blankets—this to drive out the demon of disease through the pores; if this wrought no change for the better the next step was to "borrow Buchan"; when the well-thumbed volume arrived it was consulted gravely and a prescription chosen, often perhaps more by reason of its simplicity than its applicability. But it was given in the faith. Good old Dr. Buchan was the tutelar saint of medicine throughout all rural Scotland. If Buchan failed Mrs. Fairservice was called in to shave the sufferer's head and apply a blister to the crown.

Mrs. Fairservice had a strong local infection of medical skill—the Doctor kept his medicines in her cupboard. She was credited with having originated the apophthegm "Feed the cold and hunger the colic," which, as a summing up of all medical skill, has never been surpassed.

If Mrs. Fairservice's treatment failed, the only course left was to commend the patient to Providence and wait for the doctor's weekly visit. Isaac Strang's children tried all homely remedies in swift sequence, but very soon there came a day when Lizzie Lindsay, breathless with excitement, brought

the news to Farden Ha' that the eldest of the Strangs had ridden post-haste for the doctor. The village turned itself out of doors as he went by, but the man of medicine did not pause, for he knew such a summons from Trailfit meant a *duel à outrance* with the Destroyer. He departed after his visit to Hillend grave and silent; next day it was whispered from mouth to mouth that old Isaac Strang was sick unto death, lying in the corner chamber of the Hill-end farmhouse.

He was an old man, and had been long failing, but when the news crept about that he was dying, those who whispered of it looked at each other with startled, retrospective eyes, and parted reluctantly, each conscious of the unsaid words trembling upon the other's lips, each aware of the unuttered thoughts pressing upon the other's brain, each eager for an opening to discuss again the *pros* and *cons* of the one mystery of their humble hamlet, but each determinedly repressing definite speech in regard to it. The sultry summer day wore on, an intense suppressed excitement permeated the village, and the memory of each man and woman in it reverted to a summer's day thirty years before. A day when in the full light of the afternoon sun, a pale-faced packman entered the village from "Edinburgh way," and went from door to door seeking purchasers for his goods. He had tea, snuff, and white Balbriggan stockings, linen thread on pirns, cap borders and pipes; and a pleasant word to all, though (as was remarked when every syllable this packman had uttered was recalled), he was rather inquisitive, inquiring about their ways, their mode of living, their

wages, and the customs of the countryside. A stranger evidently, and albeit curious, yet devoid of offence.

It was early afternoon when he entered the village, but so leisurely was he, so patient in showing his wares, so ready to listen to the women's talk, that by the time he reached the water trough, which in those days stood by the school-house, it was drawing near night. Isaac Strang stood by the trough watering his horses; he was carting coal from the pit, and had two carts in his charge. As the packman drew near Isaac stood leaning against the wheel of the foremost cart, whilst the grey horse drank in long sucking breaths, his flanks heaving in unison with the gurgling in his throat. The school-children, forgetful of motherly admonitions, still lingered round the school, some of the boldest sidling up to Isaac Strang's big horses, making sly twitches at their tails. Horsehair was as precious to the schoolboy then as it is to-day, being useful for many things, and always ready to lend itself to that charming experiment tried so often by these boys, in which, despite many disappointments, they still firmly believed. As the packman halted Charlie Campbell returned from inaugurating another of these experiments, having just deposited a half-dozen long horsehairs in the water-butt at the corner of the school-house, under the devout belief that in three weeks' time they would be metamorphosed into snakes. Young Telpher was tormenting a broken-winged bird, which he had tethered by a string round its leg. The packman noted the boy and his living plaything.

"Let the bird alone!" he said. "For shame, boy!"

Young Telpher returned no answer to this save a derisive schoolboy snicker, and proceeded to further exhibition of his power over the little fluttering victim.

The packman put down his pack.

"Do you like sweets?" he asked.

"Ay," said young Telpher.

"I'll give you some if you let the bird go."

"Aweel," said the boy, hastily breaking the slender tether.

The packman gave him some barley-sugar, which he took with scant courtesy, keeping a wary eye upon the bird meanwhile, where, with hysteric, broken-winged haste, it strove to escape.

"Mind! You are not to meddle with the bird again."

"Ay, wull I!" said the boy, and made a dash for it.

"Here, boy," said the packman, "promise you'll not touch the bird again."

"Gie's a farden, then," said young Telpher, boldly. Isaac Strang looked on with grim contempt of such foolery over a "speug" (sparrow).

"Will you leave it alone then altogether?"

"Sure's death."

The packman looked at him sternly, but there was no untruth in the brazen blue eyes; he put his hand in his breast and drew out a big leathern wallet, he opened it. Isaac Strang and the gaping boys saw that it was filled with yellow gold, the packman put it back impatiently, and drew forth another, filled

with the proceeds of his sales. Selecting a sixpence he gave it to young Telfer, who thereupon took to his heels, the king *pro tem.* of Trailfit.

The packman entered into conversation with Isaac Strang.

"I'll be your length to-night," Charlie Campbell heard him say in answer to a question from Strang. Then the packman took his way to the nearest cottage, and Isaac Strang went up the long length of the hill, over the crest of which he dwelt, with the horses plodding beside him, their wet noses leaving glistening marks on their sides as they snatched at tormenting flies, the carts squeaking and creaking, the stones grinding under the wheels, a fine white dust rising in their wake.

The packman stayed long in the cottage by the school; Mrs. Campbell had been a Highland lass, and had all the legends of the hills at her tongue's end, and before she knew it she was relating them to the packman.

The breathless gloaming, succeeding an unusually sultry day, had fallen upon the village ere the packman left Mrs. Campbell's cottage, promising without fail to call upon her sister-in-law, who dwelt just beyond Isaac Strang.

"Wha's that?" asked Sandy Campbell, coming up as the packman's figure faded up the hill.

"It's a packman body wi' the rarest bargains! I tell 't him tae be sure and ca' at Susan's."

"It's warm the nicht," said Sandy.

"It is that," said his wife.

"The brae shuts aff the air."

"It does sae," assented Mrs. Campbell. As they

looked up the hill they saw the packman's figure stand clear against the sky, then, as he went forward, dwindle out of sight. No one knew exactly when the first enquiries were made about the packman, but the beginning of it was probably Mrs. Campbell's indignation when she learned he had carried his bargains in snuff and cap borders past the door of her sister-in-law.

But Susan was sure he had not passed her door, for upon that night she sat knitting in the doorway till the midsummer moon was up. Little by little queries became surmises, surmises suspicions, and at last came a day when certainty of foul play laid hold of the village, and seemed to stifle it. Long before Charlie Campbell's experiment with the horse-hairs had time to mature, he, in common with every soul in the village, was a prying, peering detective. One day a white-faced man, so like the packman, that the women shuddered as he passed, arrived, half distraught for news of his twin brother, who, under the guise of a packman, had set out upon a whimsical walking tour. The presence of this man kept alive the eerie enthusiasm of the search, and the good women laid by the trifles they had bought from the packman with their sacred treasures—the marriage lines, the christening caps of dead babies, and locks cut from low-laid heads. One day Mrs. Campbell, brushing the path before her door, swept from beneath a tuft of grass a little mass of rumpled feathers with a bit of string tangled about it. She knew the story of the boy and the bird, and with the superstition of the Highlands rife in her, avowed confidently that "beyond a doot something wad turn

up noo." That very day the body of the *soi-disant* packman was found mouldering in the compost heap of Isaac Strang's potato field. Then followed in swift sequence the arrest and trial of Isaac Strang for murder, and his dismissal beneath the ban of the Scotch Court's verdict, "Not proven." The body of the murdered man was taken away, but Isaac Strang returned to his own place, and abode there. He went upon his life-way, turning a blank countenance to the questioning eyes ever upon him. He prospered, little by little, he got better horses, more cows, finer clothes, and finally a gig (when there were only two in the parish); all worldly things went well with him. His boys and girls grew up, and the story died down; only remembered when a zealous mother whipped her children for coveting the "ease and grandeur" of the Strangs—any of these mothers would rather have seen her tow-headed bairns in their coffins than had them change places with the Strangs. The Strang children grew up, but no suitors came for the girls, the men never went wooing. (It is a curious thing that each of these children died violent deaths, but that was long after.) The mother died. Isaac Strang was a masterful man, but he never could constrain his wife to wear anything but linsey woolsey of the cheapest. She had her share of the odium in which her husband lived—not of his prosperity. The people following her coffin felt vaguely that her funeral was not a sad occasion, and wondered at themselves for the curious thought. The Strangs went regularly to church and market, and a superficial friendliness existed between them and their neighbours. The

new minister could not understand the feeling against the dour-faced man and his staid family, and scoffed at the story of the packman as an old wife's tale—but the village knew whereof it spake, and when, the next day after the doctor's visit, it was bruited abroad that Isaac Strang was sick unto death, that he was even then near the end, excitement burned beneath their impassive countenances. They felt that to Isaac Strang death would not come as it came to others. Strangely enough the heavy day which hung over Trailfit was the counterpart of that fateful day thirty years ago—a day of stifling heat, full of the sullen presage of thunder.

The sultry day wore on. The doctor paid another visit at noon, and departed, having relinquished all hope of prolonging his patient's life. Then, as it behoved Christian neighbours to do, the people made proffers of help, volunteering to watch with the family till the end came. These offers were resolutely declined.

The two sons and two daughters of the dying man were resolved evidently that no stranger should see their father, and with the firmness of their breed they stood their ground. The minister was told he was delirious, and being prepared for that by the doctor, betook himself to Farden Ha' to call upon Bowman.

Mrs. Fairservice, standing at the door, heard the sound of old Isaac's voice coming faintly from the corner chamber; Elizabeth Strang heard it also, and she promptly shut the door in Mrs. Fairservice's face and left her discomfited upon the threshold, aggrieved and suspicious, but baffled in her curiosity.

Old Mrs. Campbell, Nance Pather, Mrs. Struthers, and many others, stood at the door that day, and were denied; and they knew that old Isaac, face to face at last with that fear, whose shadow he had fought so long, was striving to ease his soul by voicing its blood-guiltiness.

The day sank to an ominous gloaming. The regard of Trailfit was focussed upon the old farmhouse of Hillend, where Isaac Strang lay dying, guarded and nursed by his quartette of strong-willed children. Gloaming passed—it was night. An uncanny night—the pall-like darkness of which was riven by blue flames of lightning, unfollowed by thunder, unrelieved by rain. With every flash the heat increased, the darkness deepened, the silence brooding above the chimney-pots grew more omnipotent.

At eleven o'clock old Mrs. Campbell, drawn by a morbid desire to verify her superstitious imaginings, stole from her house, crept close to the school wall, thence in its shadow to the foot of the long hill, up it, over the brink, and along the dyke, till she came to the paling round the garden of Hillend farmhouse; she followed it till she came to the old laburnum tree that stood directly opposite Isaac Strang's sick-room, whose window glowed, a dull orange square amidst the gloom.

All was silent.

As the old woman clung to the tree the courage which had brought her thus far vanished, and the loneliness of the time and place overwhelmed her.

Her garments clung closely round her, the leaves of the trees hung breathless about her; an uncanny

stillness awed her; she put out her hand, touched the cold length of a slug, and nearly screamed aloud.

The lightning continued to flash forth, but horrible changes were taking place in its form. It was no longer dart-like tongues of fire she saw, but fantastic lanceolated flashes, balls of fire, coils of livid light, serrated bars of flame, spears of blinding white, fading crimson gleams across a quivering curtain of pale sheet lightning.

She was numb with fear, "and the moon shall be like blood," rang in her ears.

She felt her senses reeling, and summoning all her courage, fastened her gaze upon the orange glow of the window; behind that light there were human beings, environed in blood-guiltiness—still, *human*.

As her eyes rested upon the window she saw it open, then a hand stretched forth, and the sash was drawn down. A moment later she heard the closing of a door—then the window opened again, and was again closed.

Mrs. Campbell's flesh crept upon her bones. She saw the hand holding the window down, it was withdrawn, and, at once, the window opened, and from out the darkness arose sounds like the creaking of wood against wood, the grinding of rusted hinges, as if doors and windows long shut were being opened.

The old tales of those bloodguilty ones who *could not die*, and of how the windows and doors of their abode could not be kept closed till the Spirit of the Air got his prey, thronged upon her.

Again she turned her to the lightning, which now in fantastic gambol danced across the sky, but on every flash she saw, as if embossed in black,

the similitude of a four-paned window, with a hand striving to hold it down. Now and then voices came to her with fitful varying cadence; the opening and shutting of the window giving a horrible alternation of strength and weakness to the voice of old Isaac. She clung to the tree, unconscious of time, even of place, knowing only that she was in the very abiding place of fear, bound there by the terrible fascination of the tormented house, with its gaping windows, from whence issued the voice of the tortured sinner, rising and falling in strange, unnatural inflections.

She closed her eyes . . . then opened them, fearing lest the weight of invisible horror should seal them for ever.

She looked again upon the night. The midnight sky was broadly illumined by great waves of light; as she looked they seemed to concentrate and solidify into a burning centre of white, which separated itself and hurled downwards—down, down, leaving a wake of blue brilliancy, which blinded the terrified woman. She sank upon her knees and covered her head with her gown, a good drugget gown it was, but not thick enough to hide the awful illumination from that ball of fire, not thick enough to deafen her ears to that shriek in which Isaac Strang uttered his last fear; a shriek which was not a climax to a delirious rhapsody, not a cry of physical pain, nor a last plea for help, nor a farewell to those he was leaving, but a greeting to his Master made visible! And the word he uttered was not The Name which has been breathed in every accent of human agony, not that Holy Name, but THE OTHER.

Mrs. Campbell heard and knew, then merciful unconsciousness fell upon her, just as the thunder pealed forth its tardy clarion and the rain leaped from out the smitten skies to answer it.

In the grey dawn Mrs. Campbell crept home; as she sat shuddering over the fire she saw young Isaac Strang, now the head of his house, pass by. He said his father had died at midnight; he was on his way to the joiner's to order the coffin.

All that day visitors were excluded from the house of death, and when at length they were welcomed, their eager gaze was baffled by the impenetrable black of a closed coffin. They were to win no more knowledge from Isaac Strang's dead face, than they had had from his living countenance.

The funeral was conducted in the solemn Scotch fashion, the two sons bearing the head of their father to the grave.

But ere it was well over, the tongue of scandal was busy. Mrs. Campbell's story was whispered abroad, and all Trailfit took country walks past the farmhouse of Hillend, and gazed awe-stricken at the broad black brand seared upon the stones, extending diagonally from the window of the corner chamber to the ground at the angle of the house, ending in a hole, close to the foundations, a hole whose caved-in edges concealed its depth, from which, so the people averred, came a strong sulphurous odour.

The Strangs filled up the hole, and relaid the little causeway round the house.

The Doctor and the Minister made light of the gossip, and laughed at Mrs. Campbell's story (everyone

knew she had never been "right" since her husband and three sons were killed together in the pit), and sneered at the Trailfit folk for attributing rhyme or reason to the delirious cry of a sick man. They spoke too of "aërolites" and "electric displays."

"The same 's," said Mrs. Jamphraes indignantly; "the Lord had been playin' baa' wi' the deevil, or amusin' hissel terrifyin' them wha feared and respected him, which wis mair," she added darkly, "than some folk did, seemingly!"

The night which had borne forth the soul of Isaac Strang upon its tempestuous wings, did not pass unmarked at Farden Ha'.

Marriotte was always strangely responsive in her moods to the variations of the weather, and that night she had been heavily oppressed and troubled.

It was as if dark wings gathered about her, stifling her with the winnowing of their pinions. She did not keep her accustomed place at the tambour frame, but drew near where David and Bowman sat, and busied herself sorting out her reels and pirms of brilliant-hued cottons.

The surrounding gloom encroached upon the room, narrowing the light of the candles to a wavering circle.

Marriotte sat just at the verge of the circumference in such a manner that her face was in shadow, but her slender nervous hands, working so dexterously with the parti-coloured threads, were in the full radiance. She might thus fittingly typify Destiny—for it is possible to see the workings of Fate, even as her quick fingers were visible—but the ultimate purpose

is concealed as were Marriotte's eyes in the shadow. It was impossible to guess what pattern would be woven from those tangled skeins, nor is it possible to judge of the Great Design from the sorry patchwork woven of the twisted threads of our fragmentary lives, yet haply all are needful to the fabric and the strong strands knit and knotted by suffering may be as essential as the flowery broideries which shine upon the surface, but the spinning of them is harder.

Bowman looked at Marriotte Hamilton often and curiously that night. He seemed to be looking for a sign, but there was no sign given him, and, indeed, his searching was involuntary, he knew not what he sought, yet felt strangely defrauded when he was sent away without some recognition of his search.

Some infection of the gloom without, seemed to have spread within that night. Hamilton and Bowman spoke little, Marriotte was habitually quiet in the evenings, and the time hung heavily on the hands of the old clock. Earlier than usual Bowman rose, bade Hamilton and his wife good-night, and went upstairs feeling singularly alone—leaving them together. He ranged among his few books, seeking one to fit his mood. Finally he took down a fat little volume of troubadour verse, written in the *langue romane*, to which he had given some study. He strove to absorb his imaginations in "*Les dames du temps jadis*," but neither Flora the Beautiful Roman, nor Thais, nor The White Queen, nor Allys could wean him from thought of the Scotch peasant woman, whom he had left with her husband. He put aside the quaint volume impatiently, and drawing up to his table began again upon certain calculations

involved in a new mechanical idea he was trying to work out—an abrupt transition surely yet characteristic—for imagination allied to an aptitude for technical detail, is the formula for inventive genius. He soon found himself scoring his beautiful plan with meaningless lines, he threw down his pencil, and just then a long streamer of light illumined his room and passed like an oriflamme for the hosts of night. He went to the window, and drew aside the embroidered curtains, looking out he saw that all the sky was alight. He watched it long, fascinated by the spectacle. Beneath the fires of the air, the glow of the coke furnaces was barely visible, usually they seemed to lend a lurid light to all the countryside; before the lightning, their ineffective fires paled as worldly wisdom does before the Great Intelligence.

Bowman noticed that the portion of the sky most brightly illumined was at the other side of Farden Ha'—why should he not go through the great half-empty place and view the scene from a better vantage point?

He started upon the journey ere the thought was well formulated, for his imagination was caught in the lightning's fiery net, and he was utterly ensnared by it, it seemed to him all the powers of the air were holding holiday—revelling as became the gods. Might he not catch the echo of omnipotent laughter? Or hear the cadence of the chorale of the spheres as they sang together?

The passages were long and tortuous, though necessarily following the outline of the quadrangle; he passed a door beyond which he heard Hamilton's footsteps; some strange thought smote Bowman's

swarthy face to flame; her paused an instant, then went on, treading now it seemed upon the flints and shards of penitential shame. He was near the second turn in the long corridor, a little passage led here into one of those nests of rooms built at the corner from the extra materials of the old towers, he passed this, turned the corner and saw before him a desolate aisle, the outside rooms opening from this must face the view he wished, he tried one of the doors, it was locked—perhaps they all were? He passed two doors and tried the third, it opened, he entered a perfectly empty room—the uncurtained window of which was dazzlingly illuminated by a succession of blinding flashes, following so swiftly one upon another that the effect upon the eye was of a continued flame rather than of an intermittent light.

He watched; he saw the fall of the meteor over Hillend farm—it was no hotter than the fire within his breast. The thunder crashed out its majestic challenge, but the sound of David Hamilton's assured step sounded more terrible in his ear.

He looked out in anguish at the night.

It is not for us to mock and cavil at his agony, any more than we would dare scoff and jeer at the smitten skies upon which he looked.

"All subsists by elemental strife and passions are the elements of life." Who shall say that the tempest in his soul had not the sanctity and tragic splendour of the tumult in the heavens? Nor need we sneer at the comparison, nor think that the lightning leaping athwart the shoreless sea of the sky altogether transcended the strife bounded by the limits of his poor human soul, for each was an image of the

Eternal energy and we know that an image reduced in size is intensified.

The rain swept down, he turned to retrace his steps, ere he had gone far he heard a louder peal of thunder; feeling sure that a bolt had struck near by he hastily turned the handle of the door opposite him, thinking to look forth again; it was the door he had tried before, but this time in his haste he used less caution so that the handle jangled, he heard a frightened exclamation from within, it suddenly occurred to him that Lizzie or Little Davy might sleep there; he hastily proceeded on his way and had just turned the corner when he heard hurried footsteps. He had just time to snuff out his candle and step aside into the little passage, when the glimmer of another candle wavered round the corner, and the next instant Marriotte Hamilton fully dressed, and seemingly half distraught with terror, passed; she was running, her candle almost extinguished by her rapid progress. She passed where Bowman stood trembling, and sped to the door beyond which he had heard the echo of David's footsteps.

She beat upon the door with open palms as a frightened child might, calling out:

"David! O, David!!" The door was opened in a second, and David, dressed as he had been at the supper table, stood holding out his arms to her.

"David! I am so frightened! I—It's a wild night! Were you at my door? I——"

"My puir lamb," said the man falling into the tender Scotch, "My puir lamb! What has feared you? I have been waiting for you. I did not dare come to you, but I thought you would come to

me. Come in—come in. You will be safe and well here."

"But David," she said, and the unseen watcher perceived that she was trembling violently, "David, were you at my door?" She looked at him with great scared eyes.

"Have I ever gone to your door?" asked Hamilton in his deep, tender, patient voice.

She clung to his arm and began to cry.

"There are spirits in the house!" she said. "Oh, take me back to Greenbraes!" she was evidently completely overwrought.

For answer he said only—"Puir bairn! Puir bairn!" stroking her head tenderly, then in a moment or two he said: "Come in dearie," she entered and the door was closed.

Silence fell within the house, without the thunder bellowed, the lightning flashed, the heavens wept as if they would fain wash away all stain from the world.

Through the gloom and silence a man crept back whitefaced to his room, knelt down beside the open window and laid his head upon the stone sill, where the rain might beat upon it.

We may not look upon the vision given that night to his knowledge. Lit by the livid lightning, heralded by the ominous thunder, wept over by the pitiful heavens, Harald Bowman entered into that unknown country, where his heart had gone before, and became subject to all its laws and penalties.

CHAPTER VII.

"Sublimier in this world I know nothing than a Peasant Saint, could such now anywhere be met with. Such a one will take thee back to Nazareth itself"

THE revelations of that stormy night sank deep into Bowman's soul, and he looked at Marriotte with a new and very sincere reverence. The knowledge of the austerity in the relations of these two people came to him as a dream of the truth made perfect.

Marriotte, with her wild gypsy blood, her tender womanly heart, her rich imagination, a woman to whom one would involuntarily grant absolution and pity. David, beneath whose calm lived the strong deep passions of his race, whose vein of mental spirituality is translatable into the apotheosis of earthly love.

Thinking of this, and abasing himself before the unworldliness and nobility of it, Bowman began to seek for the whys and wherefores.

A dangerous quest.

He saw in Marriotte's eyes fresh candours and new simplicities.

In David the divinity of human strength.

Outwardly the life at Farden Ha' was very quiet and uneventful, the individuals of the little household had insensibly adjusted their ways so that they

never clashed. They were somewhat solitary in the community. Separated from the farmers by a certain sensitive pride, they were still further removed from the sympathies of the mining folk, though David took his part as became him in every question relating to the pits, and greeted his old neighbours cheerily when he encountered them at the kirk. The "kirk-yaird session" was greatly excited over the fact that no watch had been organized to hold vigil by the grave of old Isaac Strang.

At that time the sacrilegious depredations of grave robbers were horrifying all Scotland, and it was customary to watch the slumbers of the newly-dead for some weeks, the men taking turns at the eerie sentry-go. But the Strangs had made no reference to such an arrangement, and the village was stirred to its depths. It was bruited about that the bearers of old Isaac's coffin had found their burden a weight of lead, the village imagination travailed with that thought for days, and at length brought forth the idea that the coffin had been filled with stones—as for Isaac Strang, body and soul, The Enemy had him. The most morbid superstition could go no farther—the village shuddered at its own imaginings, and the children fled home from approaching night, and trembled in their cupboard beds with mortal terror.

It was at this juncture that Betty of The Knocken gave out invitations to a tea-party; she gave her invitations by word of mouth, and the morning of the party was seen driving home in her cart with numerous paper bags on her lap, which promised well for the feast.

The Knocken was the oldest farm structure in the parish, a long one-storeyed house, with the milk-room at one end, the byre at the other, and the dwelling sandwiched in between, all, however, under the same roof. Two great plane trees stood before the door, the little garden was overrun with marigolds, which usurped the parsley bed, elbowed the curly kale rudely in its own rows, and had even strayed afiel to the glen, where, like a ragged beggar with a lovely face, an odd one vaunted itself over the modest blue bells, envied the tall fox-gloves, and tilted its face up saucily for the kiss of the sun.

Betty's guests arrived in good season, with so much of local interest to be discussed it was not to be supposed they would be dilatory.

Marriotte had been asked, for Betty's keen old eyes had seen the loneliness in the girl's face. A restless spirit which had possessed Marriotte for some days to the exclusion of all peace, made her glad to snatch at any promise of change, however paltry.

Marriotte came with Mrs. Fairservice ; that worthy woman, having forgotten to put on her new black silk apron, was not in the best possible humour.

Mrs. Jamphraes and Isobel Telpher came together, encountering Mrs. Struthers and Miss Gibb at the door ; when Barbara Pillans arrived the party was complete.

The customary compliments were exchanged, and, as was fitting upon a ceremonious occasion, the guests put off the old Adam of their every day manners, and behaved themselves genteelly.

First one, then the other, took up her parable.

Their hostess gave a graphically gruesome account of her experience with the cholera, for Betty was the sole survivor of a family stricken out by the dread disease; it had scourged the country side sorely, and "the time o' the cholery" was remembered yet with retrospective dismay.

Then one-eyed Miss Gibb related again her wonderful story of how she helped to sew the lace upon the pillow-slips when the Queen visited Casseles House, and deigned to repose for one night beneath its loyal roof-tree. Miss Gibb was a sewing teacher, and held in high respect. One eye had been put out in Glasgow by an umbrella, but with the other she could most accurately gauge the fineness of linen, tell the real "sixteen hundred" from the coarser, and could detect instantly if a weary or careless pupil took more than the prescribed number of threads in a backstitch; her claw-like finger, armed with its heavy thimble, gave many a hard rap upon the pates of impatient pupils. She had a great hoard of old samplers wrought in curious stitches, and the favourite pupils were sometimes allowed to look them over, and to stroke the huge cat, which, tradition said, washed the dishes for Miss Gibb. It had been said of Miss Gibb that she drank vinegar to make her waist small, and painted her cheeks with beetroot to counterfeit the blush of youth, but it was conceded by all parties that she was a "genteel body," and when the farmers sent their daughters "to the sewing" it was equivalent to the finishing school and foreign tour of higher society; Miss Gibb finished her story and drew forth from the reticule she always wore a cunningly-contrived envelope of puce-coloured

silk, in which was preserved a yellowed scrap of *Valenciennes* lace; Miss Gibb felt that scrap of lace placed her in distinct personal relation to the Queen.

Mrs. Struthers, as wife of a man who had been in Jamaica in his time, told how in that country oranges were to be had for the putting out of your hand. Somehow the plate upon Betty's dresser, heaped with a pyramidal pile of oranges, seemed to lend an air of veracity to the marvellous tale, giving it that convincing touch of local colour which Mrs. Struthers' unvarnished story had perhaps lacked.

These tales having been listened to with attention, the talk became more general, and each one contributed her quota, artfully calculating the effect of each word, for whilst it was highly desirable that the conversation should culminate in a thorough discussion of contemporary matters, it would have been very unseemly to plunge in *medias res* without polite prologue and preparation. Mrs. Fairservice was the only one restive under these recognized conditions, and being a woman prone to translate her thoughts into words, she said, abruptly:

"Ye'll have been hearing that the Reverend Mr. Watson's a wanter?"

Now this was going to the heart of the matter at once, for reference to the minister would certainly fittingly introduce remarks upon his sceptical attitude towards the burning question of the day, to wit, Isaac Strang's strange death and burial. Of course, they all knew the reverend gentleman was looking for a wife, that fact that been patent for some time.

"Maiden's bairns are aye weel mannered," said Mrs. Jamphraes sententiously, carefully refraining from letting her eyes light on Miss Gibb as she spoke; "and a wanter's wife aye weel sorted!"—but here the conversation took an unexpected turn. Mrs. Struthers settled herself in her chair, pursed up her lips, and began:

"Aweel!" then she paused—expectation trembled on tip-toe for a minute, then Mrs. Telpher said insinuatingly:

"Ye were sayin'?"

"I wis sayin'," said Mrs. Struthers, beginning, as it were, to repeat something she had already uttered, "that I dinna uphaud wi' a' the views and opeenions o' the Reverend Maister Watson. He's a graund expounder, but he's certainly no' what ye micht ca' eloquent. He's too closely tied tae the earth; he has a way o' conversin' wi' gangin' bodies and was-trels at the kitchen door, and then haudin' forth frae the pulpit on them. Mony a time hae I sat fidgin' in ma seat, the whiles Maister Watson tell 't what this or that gangrel had said or done. Faith! There wis ae day, I mind it as if 't had been yestreen, when he preached naething but Haggis Sandy frae the moment he opened his mooth till he clapped the book thegither at the end o' t, and Haggis Sandy sitting on the pulpit stairs, girnin', and the neist day but ane he was gangin' through the street o' Yonderton, offering tae gie them Mr. Watson's last for thruppens', fivepens' if he said the prayers, and saxpens' if he sang the psalms! Noo, I contend, for a meenister tae preach gangrels is no' richt, and the gudeman's o' the same opeenion. The body I gae

a gowpen o' meal tae at ma kitchen door is no the ane I want upheld for an exemplar tae me, aifter walking three mile through a peat moss on the Sawbath."

"Maister Watson never upheld wi' ony trampin' body as an exemplar," said Isobel Telpher, stoutly. "It wis as warnins' no' tae follow in their road."

"I wonder at ye!" said Mrs. Struthers, her very cap-strings quivering with indignation. "Am I tae believe ma ears, Bel Telpher? Am I tae believe that the meenister wis warnin' me no' tae tak' tae the road? Ma certes! I'm thinkin' that Sandy Struthers's wife, and Sandy Struthers's weans, wi' a nineteen year tak' o' The Bloom at their back, are a hantle less like the road that ony man, goon or nae goon, wha's glebe and wha's sellery are, in a manner as ye nicht say, dependin' on the plate at the kirk-yaird yett!"

Isobel was squelched, and held her peace.

"He's graund at a christening," ventured Miss Gibb.

Mrs. Jamphraes looked at Miss Gibb, and sniffed. There was a certain occult meaning in this, but Miss Gibb feigned to disregard it. She and Mrs. Jamphraes did not mix well. The robust Christianity of Mrs. Jamphraes not doing well with Miss Gibb's maiden gentility.

Marriotte spoke for almost the first time. "Mr. Watson is going to marry a young lady in Yonder-town."

There was a visible sensation. This was definite.

"Sirs!" said Betty, feeling sure now of the suc-

cess of her party, and regarding Marriotte with eyes full of favour, "and where heard ye that?"

"It was the manager," said Marriotte, simply. "It seems he met her at the Lanishaws', and Mrs. Lanishaw was joking him, and said he should keep friendly with this young lady, for she was to be his minister's wife, and they had great laughing over it."

"I'sé warrant!" said Mrs. Jamphraes, looking somewhat favourably upon Marriotte. "Ye didna' hear her name, then?"

"O, but yes," said Marriotte. "It's Miss Otter."

"No' Provost Otter's dochter?" said Mrs. Struthers, in the tone in which a girl bids her lover not to kiss her. "Dinna' say that!"

"The same," said Marriotte.

"He's feenished himsel' noo," said Mrs. Struthers—a note of triumph strove with Christian regret in her voice. "He's bye wi' noo! I thoct he wisna' very soond, but I didna' think he would ever be sae left tae himself as tae tak' up wi' the like o' yon."

"I never saw her," said Marriotte; "what is she like?"

"An' upsettin' madam, no' worth caain' in frae a kail-yaird," said Mrs. Jamphraes. "She's as much like the manse pawrlor as I'm like the pulpit."

"Meenisters are wonderfu' feckless aboot weemen," said Mrs. Fairservice, a kind of pitying contempt in her tone. "A man in a goon's fair game for onybody be she young or auld. It seems tae be a failing that gangs wi' the cloth. Hae ye no' remarked that there's scarce a lad escapes frae the devenity classes but some limmer has his promise

tae mairry her; it'll be in writin', I'm thinkin', in maist cases, and the jauds haud them till 't. There's naething mair desired among the gentry than tae hae the promise o' a meenister. And lads at the collegin' are snapped up, puir callants, afore they ken ae woman frae anither."

"It's scunnersome!" said Mrs. Jamphraes, with emphasis. "Whenever a young ane preaches in the kirk, I say tae masel', 'Puir callant! I wonder what like 'n a ane has gotten you!'"

"Mr. Bowman says," said Marriotte, "that Mr. Watson thinks a great deal of Miss Otter, and that they are to be married almost at once."

"I dinna doot it!" said Mrs. Fairservice. "I dinna doot it! She'll no give him time tae tak' the rue."

"Aweel! The pairish 'll no tak' kindly tae auld Provost Otter's dochter in the manse," said Mrs. Struthers, decisively. "Div' ye ken, there wis na' learnin' enough for her in a' braid Scotland, and she wis sent ower seas tae France, tae the school? And it's no ane or twa, but twinty, I've heard say it, that she wis in a papist nuns' hoose."

"He'd better awa tae the Hielan's, him and his madam," said Mrs. Jamphraes. "Trailfit 'll never sit under a man controlled by a papisher!"

"I wis thinking," said Miss Gibb, cautiously, "that there wis something by ordnar' wi' Maister Watson the noo; when the news wis tell't him aboot the wecht o' Isaac Strang's coffin, and aboot the terrible oncarry the speerits had that nicht, he said it wis naething but blethers, and began a lang lecture aboot faain' stars, and sic' like——" Miss Gibb paused

abruptly, she had brought matters to a crisis, and trembled at her own temerity.

"I wonder," said Marriotte, a sort of wistfulness in her tone, "I wonder if Isaac Strang was really blood-guilty. His face seemed aye more wearied than wicked to me, and——"

Mrs. Struthers interrupted her, but not unkindly.

"Ye're speaking oot o' the peety o' yer heart, Marriotte, and no' frae what ye ken, for it wis lang afore your time. Isaac Strang killed the packman as shure's the sun's in the sky, but it's no tae be questioned that he suffered sair for 't!"

"And his weans, forbye," said Betty, and though they did not notice it, her voice trembled.

"The sins of the fathers——" began Mrs. Fair-service, with a stoical acceptance of the doctrine as applied to others.

"I felt very sorry for them," said Marriotte, half shamefacedly. No one seemed to heed her speech, but it made Betty of The Knocken her friend for life—and the time was coming for Marriotte when she would sorely need a friend.

"They're hardy anes, the Strangs," said Mrs. Struthers. "Fancy them straikin' their faither's corp!"

"If there wis ony corp tae straik," said Mrs. Fair-service.

"There's them wha doots it," said Mrs. Jamphraes, darkly—then Betty spoke out:

"It wis me strakit Isaac Strang"—the women looked at her in speechless amazement—this, then, was the cause of Betty's party!

"It wis *you!*" said Mrs. Struthers; and even Mrs. Jamphraes was glad she had taken the word upon her.

"Yes," said Betty, and a delicate blush brightened her faded cheek—such a blush as lingers in the heart of a dried rose. "They sent for me at grey daylight, and I gaed, and wis there till he passed, and I straikit him, and cam' hame." She looked at them. They remembered that Isaac Strang had been the one lover of Betty's youth. Not one of these women, insatiable gossips as they were, strove by look or word to win more from Betty than she had chosen to tell them, nor asked one question about the scenes of that death-bed, which they had pictured as attended by the Evil One in *propria persona*. Nor did Betty ever break silence upon the subject, although it was known afterwards that when the new minister came old Betty sought his study one day to ask if it was indeed deadly sin to pray for one gone before, one, Betty said, who had confessed to his God, but not to man; and it was cited as one of the many charges of heresy against this minister when he was expelled, that he had bidden Betty go her ways comforted, and pray for whom she would, living or dead, so that it were with pure lips, and leave the rest in God's hands. Thus it came about that for many years (for Betty of The Knocken lived long beyond her generation), the names of two people mingled in Betty's prayers, and the one was the name of the lover of her youth, who had slighted her, and the other was the name of the daughter of the woman who had triumphed over her, and despised the triumph.

"The kettle's boiling!" said Betty, briskly. "Ye'll be a' needin' yer teas." Whereupon she bustled about unaffectedly, laying out her best; soon they were all seated, and, somehow, all rancour had passed from their speech, they partook of everything, and were lavish of praise. Old Betty's heart glowed within her.

"Thae's curus cups thae, surely!" said Mrs. Struthers, in a voice of admiration. "I maun hae anither fill, Betty! Ma mooth hasna' gotten the richt set o' the purflin' yet," saying which, she, in an elegant manner, and with much politeness, turned and threw the dregs from her cup before passing it to be refilled. This action, in itself a harmless elegance of deportment, proved in effect a striking illustration of that text which bids us not to cause our brother to offend. For some months after, Miss Gibb, being entertained with a cup of tea in the manse sitting-room, was minded to emulate Mrs. Struther's polite deportment, but being somewhat flurried by the unusual circumstance of drinking tea out of the manse china, and rather uncertain of her own behaviour, was so unfortunate as to let the cup slip, to the consternation both of herself and the minister's lady, who was never able afterwards to convince herself that Miss Gibb was "right," for, as Mrs. Watson said, she had heard of Jacobites breaking the glass after drinking to the "King over the water," but she had never heard of throwing the cup into the grate after partaking of afternoon tea.

Betty beamed upon her guests, and replenished their cups with hearty hospitality, and told yet again how the laird's wife had chosen them herself, and

sent them "with her compliments." "For a' the world like ae leddy tae anither."

Presently tea was over, and the visitors were taken on a tour of inspection, which embraced everything, from the home-made cheeses to the turnip field.

"Yon's Greenbraes, Marriotte," said Betty, gently touching her arm, and pointing to where a gable showed against the green shoulder of a hill.

"Yes," said Marriotte, and Betty's keen old eyes caught a glimmer of tears in the soft eyes of the younger woman.

"I see it even in my dreams," added Marriotte, in a smothered voice.

"Puir bairn!" said Betty, looking at her shrewdly, wondering at the source of the emotion, which was the outcome of Marriotte's alien blood. "Puir bairn. There's an unco difference atween a decent fairm-hoose and yon uncanny barn o' a castle!"

"There's a great difference between a green hillside and a black coal-pit," said Marriotte, with a break in her voice. The others drew near, and Marriotte hastily stooped to her feet to gather a sprig of apple-ringey, and ever after the aromatic scent of the homely southern-wood recalled to her the quiet eventide, the pleasant hush, the peaceful sky, and the far-away prospect of the hillside home she had possessed for so short a time, but which was to the last a quiet haven, where her thoughts, when tossed upon a stormy sea, might cast anchor in peace.

They went back to the house, Betty's red-armed serving lass was singing cheerily as she strewed fresh straw in the byre. The guests put on their head-gear, and Betty distributed the oranges among them,

and sundry bits of short-bread and seed cake for the weans; and they departed.

When they were all gone Betty stood looking at the *débris* of her little feast; the fire was low, the kettle's song was a little dreary, for the water was cooling, a certain chill had encroached upon the room, as if one very, very cold had stolen in to take the place of the newly-departed guests. It was one of the very few times in her life that Betty realized that she was old and alone. She sat down, folding her hard-wrought old hands in unaccustomed idleness. She had told them . . . and justified his children . . . surely she had done what she could for the lover of her youth, who had sent for her to be with him at the end! Her love had blossomed forth at last, but it was a flower born out of due season, lonely, pallid as a Christmas rose which blooms through ice. As Betty's guests reflected upon the events of the afternoon, they remembered that Betty had not said Isaac Strang was innocent.

It was not yet twilight when the group of women left the Knocken; Miss Gibb and Mrs. Struthers took one road, the others struck across the fields to Trailfit, save Marriotte, who said she was going round by the road.

"It's three miles if it's an inch, by the road," said Mrs. Fairservice.

"I'm needing the walk," said Marriotte.

"But the manager'll be wanting his tea," said Mrs. Jamphraes.

"It's the night he brings the week's money," said Marriotte; "and he'll get his tea with Mrs. Lanishaw."

"And the young leddy!" said Mrs. Jamphraes with an indescribable accent. Then she added, almost fiercely: "Ma certes! She's auld eneuch tae be his mither!" which statement was certainly hyperbolic. "Weel, gude-een, Marriotte. I've ma man's meat tae mak' when I gang hame, and standin' blethering, here 'll no tak' me tae Trailfit."

"Good night," said Marriotte, and stood watching as they pushed through a thin bit in the hawthorn hedge. Then she turned towards the long road, which, bordered upon one side by the hedge-row, upon the other by the broad stretches of a moor, seemed to lead away into an unknown world. It led only to the old post road, as Marriotte well knew, but the misty illusiveness of the oncoming gloaming transfigured it into an enchanted pathway leading into realms of mystery. As Marriotte took the first steps along this highway, she was conscious of an entrancing sense of freedom—the only living creature as far as the eye could reach, she seemed isolated equally from human companionship and human restraint. Her kinship to nature was so closely knit, that she felt a sense of strange spiritual companionship amid the phantom shades and spectral greyness of the silent moor. From out of its quiet, a still small voice whispered strangely in her ear, from out of its mists an ethereal wing beckoned to her, the subtle wildness which is expressed in bush and stone and bracken entered into her like an intoxication, the faraway cry of the whaup, that lone bird and eerie, seemed to be the personal and familiar plaint of her restless lonely spirit; she felt an awed delight in it, as one might on hearing the inexpressible

yearnings of his soul made articulate. But her feet were not long content with the highway, the "straight road," alas! was not for one of her blood. The moor appealed to her insistently, each breath of peat or moss or heather was a voice calling to one that replied—as "deep answereth to deep" her soul responded to the summons. Now and then a thread of perfume, subtle as temptation, came to her, hinting of flowers in secret places, of the sweets invisible from the high road . . . the mate of the whaup answered him from the heather, and Marriotte left the road.

As she set her foot upon the moor she became a part of its wildness. A deep rose flushed her cheeks, her heart throbbed till she felt it pulsing in the palms of her hands, an indefinable and unreasoning expectation quickened her breath between her parted lips, her eyes had the look in them as of those who see visions, something of the awe of anticipated revelations was upon her face. In such fashion one might fancy Kilmeny, "as pure as pure could be," wandered forth from her father's shieling to meet the king of faëry unawares.

Marriotte Hamilton was too much a child of nature to be introspective, she did not comprehend the nature of the unrest manifested in her aimless flight across the moor. In a more sophisticated nature it would have begotten mental rebellion; in her it called for some physical outlet. The tender wings of twilight were folded about the world and Marriotte's thought became retrospective. She recalled her childhood's home, its squalor, her two wicked brothers, her father and mother—they were like the evil shadows in an

evil dream. She remembered her first meeting with David, so strong, so sanguine—a presence before which the evil fled away; she remembered his love-making and the betrothal kiss given when the land was golden with the blossom of the broom. She had said "Yes," knowing only that it would take her away from the coarseness and brutality of her home, grasping at his offer as a child seizes at the promise of a holiday which rescues it from tasks. In the brief weeks which followed, she saw sometimes an expression upon David's face, which puzzled and vaguely troubled her virgin heart, heard a deep appeal in his tone to which nothing in her replied, to which she could find no answer but a timorous caress, saw a look in his eyes from which she involuntarily sought to hide against his breast. Then came their wedding in the manse parlour in Yondertown, and David's almost solemn tenderness as he took her home in the evening to Greenbraes. He left her a few minutes to put up the horse, then entered and took her in his arms with the might and right of a husband. That embrace showed her what she had done—the wrong she had wrought this man in marrying him. Once more she sobbed out an incoherent plea to the man whose heart was leaping against her own, a piteous appeal to Love against its own passion, once more she lay passive against his shoulder whilst he did triumphant battle with himself, once more she listened to the words with which a man crucified his manhood, once more she clung to him in a passion of gratitude, once more she sank to rest, waking fearfully to find a pale, set face and tear-filled eyes bending above her dreams . . . Then (in her

vision—which was only memory) came the long, sweet days, when, afar from the tumult and turmoil of the village, her life was soothed to the peaceful rhythm of Nature's processes, as she saw them evidenced in the green fields about her. Had this continued—? but who can tell? Circumstances are strong to make or mar our lives, but Fate is so much stronger. Many sheaves are garnered into the barn, but one is left for the birds of the air to reive at, one sheaf adorns the altar of the Harvest Home, another is beaten by the flail, and for these things no reason is decipherable, and perhaps, after all, the wisest of us are nothing more than "small red leaves in the mill-water."

A strange mental excitement grew upon Marriotte; Nature's whip and steel were urging her self-consciousness into life. The first impulse of protest stirred within her soul: David had, indeed, been defrauded, but what of herself? Had she then no birthright to joy? Was she but a beggar at life's doorstep, foreordained to take the crusts vouchsafed to her, or go for ever hungry? Why did she seem like an alien among those of her own country? As if she was among them for a space only, like the birds which came in the summer and fled away before the first cold blasts; but the birds builded them nests and each sang to its mate—she was ever alone. So the same old mysteries which confronted the lonely Adam, which have tormented and beguiled men and women from time immemorial presented themselves incoherently and insistently to Marriotte Hamilton that night.

We are told in an old nursery tale of an untidy girl set to straighten tangled skeins of silk. Her

task seemed hopeless till the Genius of Order touched them with her wand and immediately they were arranged harmoniously. So it is with us, Life presents itself a tangled skein indeed, and some special personal illumination is needed to make us see "the order in all things." Very suddenly Marriotte found herself upon the edge of the post-road, where it divided the moor, the sound of falling water came to her faintly, behind the plantation a mountain stream, swelled by many tributaries to a small river, leaped over a linn into a fathomless pool, known locally as "the Deil's Awmous dish,"* and familiarly called the Deil's dish—which was supposed to be bottomless, like the family seat of Satan. After its plunge and its escape from the pool, the stream crept in subdued fashion down through the lowlands, where man's yoke was laid upon it, so that it expiated its turbulent life in the hills by turning fifty mill-wheels ere it won to the Nirvana of the ocean. Upon the left hand a deep glen dipped down between the road and the moor, near the entrance to which lay a large iron cylinder, rusted red by rain and sun, an old boiler, at whose appearance there no one wondered; it had been so long a part of the scene that its incongruity and inconsequence were forgotten. As Marriotte drew near it there suddenly sounded from within it a horrid din, a medley of shouts, threats, and pleas, to an accompaniment of kicks against the resounding sides. Truth to tell, the threats were out of all proportion to the pleas, and by them Marriotte recognised the unseen speaker. She laughed aloud—

* Note : An awmous dish was a wooden basin carried by beggars in which to receive their alms of meal.

for after all she was only a girl—and ran to look in upon Tam Jamphraes, raging in the boiler. Tam certainly was a “christened bairn” called Thomas after his father and grandfather as was fitting, yet, truly, his real name, to which he had an inalienable right, was Legion. His mother’s absence at Betty’s tea-party had left Tam free. He had gathered a band of boys together and led them forth to the wilderness. When there, however, he found them a rebellious people. The old boiler had drawn them as surely as the magnet draws metal; betrayed by the meretricious twinkle of a bit of tin in the far end of the boiler, Tam had descended in search of the treasure which might naturally be expected to be found there. Tam’s followers had dutifully helped him to enter by the square hole in the top side of the boiler, but, alas and alack! They refused to give him the slight but necessary aid to get out. They left him in this predicament till the bravest grew apprehensive of Tam’s vengeance, then they approached to parley with pacific intention. To their horror no reply was vouchsafed; at length Guthrie Fairservice ventured to peer in, Tam’s apparently lifeless body lay in the shadow. They had killed him. Just what form of sudden death Tam had died they could not determine, but fear laid hold upon them, they fled the spot, and having bound themselves by a horrid oath to silence, separated, and each went his own way, feeling the brand of Cain upon his brow, suffering agonies to which no licking they had ever received was worthy to be compared. This was exactly what the wily Tam had foreseen, the thought was delightful enough to make him sustain

his arduous role of silence ; he filled his feigned sleep with dreams of vengeance (which, it may be said, he fully realized). Marriotte gave Tam the slight help he needed to get out, and when he saw who his deliverer was his impish face grew grave.

"Mrs. Hamilton!" he cried; "is't you? And me nearly daft tryin' tae win oot that I nicht gang tae ye! Is this no' the nicht the manager brings hame the week's wage? Aweel! Yer twa brithers hae made a plot tae rob him at the Murderer's Stane; they cam' here and leaned against the biler and made their plans. I wis lying like a moose tae gar the lads think I wis deid and I heard every word they said. What's tae be dune? Wull I rin and warn him?" -

"No," said Marriotte, and she looked about at the gathering gloom which now seemed instinct with menace. "No. Run you and tell David what you've told me! Tell him I'm away to stop them, and ask him to come and meet me. Rin, Tam!" she cried, Scots rising to her lips as she wished to emphasize her words. "Rin."

Tam needed no second bidding, he gave a boyish screech to show he was free, set his toes to the road and sped away to the village. Marriotte, all her vague rebellion transfigured into a fiery energy, and all her inconsequent thoughts knit into one great apprehension, turned, and ran in the opposite direction.

A chill excitement winged her feet. The Murderer's Stone was a fitting place for such an evil tryste. Fifty years before, the farmer of The Bloom, coming home on a market night, saw a girl struggling with two men beside the big boulder at the sharp turn of the road through the lonely moorland.

"Let the lass alone!" he cried, and dismounted. The brutes set upon him with savage fury. The girl fled; succour came, too late. A dark red mark upon the boulder, never noticed till then, was popularly supposed to be the indelible stain of the murdered farmer's blood. At night belated travellers had heard the sound of ghostly battle waged at the Murderer's Stone; moreover, it was not far from the moss hole where the shepherd was smothered, and the nearest house was the haunted farmhouse of Kilbogie. To this house the Devil had once paid a visit in *propria persona*. For one night the farmer heard the sound of madly galloping hoofs, and from the thunder of the tread, guessed that it was the great black stallion come home from the hillside; an instant later a terrible commotion was heard in the farmyard, with the hollow thunder of hoofs beating upon oak. The farmer went to the window and looked out; in those days the Devil did his errands personally, and not by proxy; filled with superstitious fear the farmer did not go out, but he saw the horse careering round and round the farmyard, as if fiend-ridden indeed; the horse was mad with terror, and going to the stable door, plunged against it with his fore feet. It did not open. With—so the farmer told—a horrible shriek of despair the horse turned and fled from the place; as he passed the gate the farmer "got a gliff o' a Thing on his back." Next day the horse's entrails were found knotted round a tree, the body was nowhere seen—but at times the terrible cry of the horse was heard to wail over the wide moor, so that the faraway shepherds, asleep in the bothy on

the hillside, heard, and shuddered under their plaids. All these uncanny stories Marriotte knew, with scores of others; to her imaginative nature all things seemed possible; she sped on accompanied by weird shapes of terror, surrounded by menacing phantoms, trembling in anticipation of some horrible sound. At length she drew near the Murderer's Stone, and saw, in the greyness, the crouching figures of two men hiding behind it. Seen thus their shapes were indeterminate and non-human. To the woman's overstrung imagination they seemed like creatures of the night bent upon evil. Without pausing she ran up to them.

"Callum!" she said. "Jock!! O, are you not ashamed, and him living under your sister's roof? I have come all the way across the red moor alone to stop you!"

Callum interrupted her—there was a touch of relief in his brutal voice.

"Ye're alane, are ye? Hech! I thocht the hale pairish wis at yer back!" A sudden fear smote her. It had never occurred to her that they would persist in their evil intent. Their faces frightened her; either they had grown more wicked, or she had forgotten.

Callum gripped her wrist. Jock rose out of the shadow and stood over her threateningly.

"It's you," he said, with an oath; "you vermin! What are ye daein' here? Burning yer mooth wi' ither folk's parritch?"

"I'm come to stop you," said Marriotte, her anger beginning to take fire from theirs. "To think you would steal! Are you not ashamed?"

"That'll dae," cried Callum (and feeling their poor dignity assaulted, the rage of the miserable unstable creatures concentrated itself upon her). "I could wring your neck like a chicken's?"

"Awa back the road ye cam', and be thankfu' ye're getting aff sae easily," said Jack.

Marriotte gave a quick movement, wrenched herself free, and sprang down the road towards Yondertown, but she slipped and fell; ere she could recover herself Callum had her by the arm; he drew her back beside the Murderer's Stone.

"Doon on yer knees and beg pardon," he said. Marriotte had a sick vision of the tragedy enacted upon this very spot fifty years before, then all the hot proud blood sang in her ears, and voiced itself in contemptuous speech.

"Beg pardon of you two!" she cried. "A pair of thieves! Two cowards hiding behind a stone on a moor!—like weasels watching for——"

It was a simple thing to force her to her knees.

"Beg, you ——" He called her an evil name.

"Never," she panted.

"Gie her white hauns a twust," said Jack.

Callum wrung the delicate wrists, Marriotte grew white as death, the two vengeful faces lowered over her in the gloaming, she gave a shrill cry of pain and sank limply down—at that moment a man and horse were on them. Bowman, ignorant of the dangers of the moss, had cut across from one road to the other at an angle, and by some chance won safely through. He laid about him with his heavy whip—but Jock and Callum were already leaping away in the shrouding mists. Then Bowman dis-

mounted. At his feet lay Marriotte Hamilton, her face pallid and pinched.

There came upon him one of those moments wherein a man tastes of the bitterness of death. A thousand fantastic conjectures fled through his brain, but they were not to be dwelt upon whilst She lay like a broken lily at his feet. He took her up with infinite gentleness—and, after much difficulty, managed to get her on his horse, and putting his arm about her went thus slowly through the dusk.

Marriotte was young, and life was vivid in her; the movement of the horse and the cool air revived her in a measure, but the world to which she awakened was so strange that she thought herself still in the house of dreams. In after days she had a trancelike recollection of this experience, as of a pilgrimage in another world; such memories as an infant might have of pre-natal days; strange stirrings of wings seemed to be about her; she moved not of her own volition, breathed, but surely with the inspiration of other lips, was supported, not by her own effort; an acute pain thrilled through her now and then, but her head was pillowed in such fashion that all thought of suffering was soothed by the slumber song of a madly-beating heart, to whose comforting she yielded as innocently as a child yields to the spell of its mother's bosom; nay, as sensation crept back to her she pressed closer to the breast upon which she leaned, moved thereto by an impersonal sense of *bien être*. Afterwards it seemed to her that during the vague lapsing of her dream one had called her by name, "Marriotte—Marriotte"—but she knew not if it was the Angel of Life or of

Death. And so intimately did the voice appeal to her that she did not know if it came from within or without. . . . They were at the crest of The Puir-wife's braes when David met them, half distraught.

"God," he cried, "she is not *dead*!"

"No—no," said Bowman.

"Marriotte!" said David—and his arms were about her now "Marriotte! Speak to me!" Marriotte opened her eyes—this was real life come back to her again, and David's voice sounding in it, as always.

She looked at Bowman, smiled upon him, a strange smile of recognition, which he strained to see in the greyness; then she spoke to David, very gently, but as one afar off.

"I am here, David, and well. They have hurt my wrists; that is all."

An irrepressible sob broke from Hamilton's lips. It roused her as nothing else could have done. She slipped from Bowman's clasp to the ground, catching at David unsteadily.

"My dear," she said, "I am safe and well, and beside you. What more is needed?" Then complete memory came back with a rush—a new fear assailed her. "Oh, tell me!" she cried. "They did not get the money or hurt you?"

Bowman was bewildered. In a word Hamilton explained. Meanwhile the air had quite revived Marriotte. She began the descent of the hill. At its foot Hamilton said, "You had better ride on now, Mr. Bowman—Trailfit is fond of talk."

Bowman mounted and rode on. He had not been

long at Farden Ha' when they arrived. He was waiting beside Marriotte's embroidery frame.

"You'll sit there," said Hamilton, putting her into her accustomed chair, "and I'll bring you something." He hastened from the room.

Bowman spoke hurriedly, an emotion in his voice which he could not control.

"What am I to say to you? How can I thank you for coming to warn me. You are so good—so lovely—so brave—so——"

"Oh, hush!" she said, and her face was shame-smitten. "You do not know! They were my brothers—my own brothers!"

A quick fear assailed him, he bent over eagerly, he could hear Hamilton moving about in the passage.

"Mrs. Hamilton!" he said. "Tell me one thing—was it to save your brothers that you crossed the lonely moor—to save them from sin, or me from——"

"It was for you," she said—a certain reproach was in her accent.

Words trembled upon his lips, a light leaped into his eyes. Hamilton entered, and poor pretty Marriotte, with her pale face and swollen wrists, was made much of, till, quite suddenly, she burst into a passion of tears.

Bowman rose, half-distractedly.

"Mrs. Hamilton is wearied out!" he said, and left the room, his swarthy face pale as death.

Next day David was absent from the pit. He found his brothers-in-law defiant, and left them senseless, having previously impressed upon them that

he would finish them if he needed to come a second time. They evidently had faith in his promises, for the next ship from Glasgow to America took with it two sadly-battered emigrants, who addressed each other as "Jock" and "Callum."

CHAPTER VIII.

"The moving finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

HARALD BOWMAN stood looking out of his window one day at earliest dawn. He had awakened in the small hours of the morning, and with the clarity of mental vision, which sometimes comes at such a season, he had considered the issues of his life, and had found them strangely confused. But a short time before and the purposes of his life had seemed to be clearly defined even to their ultimate intentions—now he was plunged into uncertainty and unrest. After some hours of restless and unsatisfactory pondering, there grew out of the darkness the square of the window palely suffused with the dawn; presently he could trace the diamonded lattice upon it—he rose, hastily, and in a few moments stood looking forth on the unawakened world. His range of vision was limited by a dense white mist which hovered so closely about Farden Ha' that the high stone wall which bounded the garden was hidden, and the garden seemed illimitable. The old house was quiet as the

grave, the lustrous white curtain of the mist shut out the grimy village, the sordid street, the furnaces and the abomination of desolation where the pits gaped blackly at the beauties of the sky. There was a sacerdotal purity in the hour which quieted Bowman's turbulent spirit. He looked long and steadfastly at the mist as if upon its shining whiteness he might read some saving message, see some symbol to guide him, but no miracle was vouchsafed till he let fall his eyes and there, pacing up and down the garden paths, he saw Marriotte Hamilton. The tragic opportuneness of her presence almost terrified him, for he knew this was the answer to all the self-questioning of the past hours, knew that all his interests, of soul, mind and body, were centred upon that woman walking in pale austerity in the narrow paths of her garden, with a mist of dew like a crown of tears upon her head.

A solemn sense of immemorial destiny stilled his heart. A certainty of tragedy chilled all the arrogant impulses of his manhood.

Suddenly Marriotte paused, and as suddenly raised her eyes to his. Surely as the sun draws the water, his soul had drawn hers. (Alas! The most radiant clouds dissolve in rain!) But, surely, surely we must believe that both summons and response were the manifestations of unconscious Destiny; for she was a wife, albeit in name only, yet, perhaps, a greater debtor to her husband's honour, because of that, and he was a guest beneath a poor man's roof. For very pity of poor humanity—that humanity in which we all have part and lot with the worst—we would not believe that voluntarily she chose her path, that

of deliberate purpose he set himself to steal the one ewe lamb of the poor man?

Silent, rapt, immobile, the woman looked up, the man looked down—thus for a space which with its consequences cannot be measured by earthly computation nor with its tragic potentialities towards these two, be described in symbols of sound or script—they stood, their faces yearning to each other; his solemn with prescience, grave with a delight which shook the foundations of his being; hers white in the exalted candour of its revelations, eloquent with the appeal of true innocence. In his eyes, however strangely throned, Love, which rules by divine right, shone, like a righteous king reigning over a stolen kingdom; the windows of her soul were opened wide, showing the altars swept and garnished, awaiting Love's gifts.

Then—suddenly—a voice jarred through the eloquent silence, breaking the spell of its enchantment. It was the voice of David Hamilton calling to Lizzie. There seemed to be an immediate stir throughout the world, from out the mists came the crowing of cocks, the sound of voices, all the every day noises held in abeyance by the rapture of that transfiguration rushed in upon them; the rough stones of the old wall tore the curtain of mist, and through the rents all the ugliness of the sordid village showed uncouthly. For a moment Bowman's eyes held the vision clear—then she vanished, going to her husband, who called to her with tender chiding to come in out of the fog.

Bowman sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands, for, using a woman's face as a magic

crystal, "immortal morning's lovely light" had shown him his own soul . . .

The wholesome odour of oatmeal told him that breakfast waited below. He came to himself with a start, his pulses bounded with perilous joy—he was going down to see Marriotte. "Marriotte"—he said the name aloud, an almost boyish shyness crept over his brown face—that name soon became a prayer to him, uttered many times when he was alone, in the pit, on the moors, at night in his room. A natural wish to appear well in her eyes formulated itself, for the first time in his life Bowman wished to please, even in his appearance. A strange sweet thought that he himself, his black hair, his height, his eyes, might grow precious in her sight almost overwhelmed him. There are only two people in the world to whom a man's looks mean anything—his mother and the woman who loves him. To the mother, the manly beauty is but a finger-post pointing back to the precious beginnings of babyhood; in his physical perfections she sees ever the development of infantile grace, and through it sees always and loves always the baby that clung about her neck, but the other woman who loves him sees in him the shape and semblance of the Gods. As a sculptor looking at the block of marble sees in it the unhewn statue which is to make him immortal, so a woman sees in her beloved the prefiguration of her deity. Thus the physical incidentals which over-wise ones would scoff at as among the "little things" of life's busy day, acquire a holy and precious sanctity, so that the swing of a pair of broad shoulders, the meanest trick

of hand or manner, a stubborn lock upon a cherished head, become merged among the great vital facts, and bereft hearts cry for them and will not be comforted. One of the sweetest and most touching revelations of love is, that this body which is so poor and perishing, yet which is after all the medium and casket for the soul that suffers and the heart that bleeds, is dear and worthy in the eyes of another. This thought made Bowman enter the living room with half eager, half shy haste. The table was spread. Lizzie Lindsay was bustling about, little Davy gloomed in his corner, David Hamilton was there, and they were all like so many shades intruding unsought and undesired. For Marriotte was there also; standing by the hearth where a little fire burned. David had been speaking to her; as he came a step towards Bowman, holding out his hand for the customary morning greeting, he continued his speech, drawing Bowman into it with his characteristic cordiality.

"Here's Mr. Bowman," he said; "and I'm sure he will be on my side! What do you think, Mr. Bowman, this foolish lassie was out-bye in the garden this morning with the fog wetting her hair and chilling her to the bone! And a fine job Lizzie and I have had getting some heat into her before the kitchen fire. What do you think of that for the mistress of Farden Ha'?"

"I'm afraid it was a little rash," said Bowman, and it seemed to him his whole heart rushed to his lips and battled to express itself.

"Yes," she said, "I should not have gone."

"But you will not again?" urged Hamilton.

"No," she said, very distinctly.

A strange feeling of being defrauded stirred in Bowman's breast. He looked at her down-bent head so near her husband's shoulder, at the soft hair still shining with the damp—then he addressed her directly.

"So you have resolved not to go out in the early morning again?"

"Yes," she said, her lips trembling—a tremor shaking her figure.

"You are chilled to the heart!" cried David with concern, but neither of the two heard him.

"You will change your mind," said Bowman, there was a hint of masterfulness, a shade of question, a breath of reproach in his voice.

"No, I will not," she said, and raising her heavy lids, looked at him for the second time that morning.

His heart stood still.

There was a kind of hunted defiance in her beautiful eyes, as if, face to face with a pursuing fate she was brought to bay, but meant to make a brave fight—and this man who had so lately vowed vows to bear all the burden of their dual destiny, so that no tittle of it should fall upon her, found nothing better to do than to reply to her eyes with a look of dumb prayer in his own. Marriotte Hamilton read, and repaid him with a poignant glance wherein scorn, reproach and passionate negation strove to quench a growing light. His impetuous heart took the message to itself. He realized that she had appealed to his strength for help and had been refused.

"We must all help you to keep your resolves," he said, his quiet voice trembling in his eagerness to make amends. Her face lighted with gratitude, the

restraint she had put upon herself fell from her, she made a quick step away from the two men, her head poised itself in its proudest fashion, she cried in a voice vibrant with gladness—thrilling with a suppressed excitement:

"Come! I have been scolded enough and to spare! Come away to your breakfast, then away to your work. I will rule Farden Ha'—and myself."

"And us too, I'm thinking," said David, delighted to see the colour back in her cheeks.

"It looks like it," said Bowman, feeling suddenly that his heart was but a ball at the foot of this humble woman—that the coarse drugget gown she wore was the vesture of his divinity. Marriotte held her head high, a new light was in her lovely eyes, a new rose upon her cheeks. Poor woman! She thought the battle fought and won. There could be no stronger proof of her unsophistication. She followed to the door to see them off. These two men who loved her. David, in his oil-smeared blackened clothes, Bowman in his well-fitting tweeds. Her laugh rang out so gaily and girlishly after them that David Hamilton's heart rose against the maimed rites accorded to its love. The two men left her at the entry door, Bowman's eyes relinquishing her reluctantly. Beyond the gate Hamilton hastily turned, and with a muttered word to his companion, went back to where his wife stood, and taking her in his arms kissed her almost solemnly; she knew that kisses such as these were fresh seals upon renewed resolutions, yet she shrank from his lips; she realized with despair that she could not endure many such. Hamilton let her out of his arms and

strode away again; he did not look back or he might have seen Marriotte make a gesture of mute despair—and whilst Marriotte stood shrinking from her husband's caress, Bowman hastened to the pit, a chaos of warring thoughts within his breast, for, with the malicious clairvoyancy which tortures lovers, he knew that Hamilton had gone back to take what he would have given his life for.

One pair of eyes, however, had seen Marriotte's gesture after her husband's departure. Little Davy, looking down from a tower window, had seen Marriotte's white look of repulsion, hardly concealed till her husband turned away—had seen the blackness of deadly envy upon Bowman's countenance as he hastened away from the gate, had seen the pain upon David's brow as he too went, and climbing up to the top-most chamber in the tower, the boy flung himself down and dwelt upon these things. A strange percipient faculty dwelt in this boy—when he played his violin he saw wonderful visions, heard weird stories syllabled forth from the quivering strings. Perhaps it was only the imagination of this untutored urchin which evolved these visions, perhaps it was some nascent power which conjured up the memory of things past, and spread before the half-comprehending eye of its possessor the panorama of bye-gone days. Fantastic presentations! Wild medleys of music and mirth too mad and merry to be really joyful—swift embraces and swifter dagger thrusts—dangerous kisses drenched in blood—seen in the shade of unctuous olive trees, bathed in an atmosphere of liquid gold, such as swims in Southern uplands. Could any imagination, how-

ever vivid, evolve these things from the realities of life as this boy saw them? The grimy streets, the sombre skies, the undemonstrative people, the austere piety, the coarse sins of a mining village.

However this may be, the boy certainly was acutely sensitive, taking mental impressions very readily, and translating them as quickly as the ear perceives sounds; often when David Hamilton's soul strove within him, the boy, feeling the tempest and turmoil, experienced a reflex of all its storm and stress—like a mirror which rays back the counterfeit presentiment of all that passes before it, little Davy in his dumb inarticulate fashion symbolled forth the secret thoughts of those about him. Lying in the tower the boy asked himself angrily why David looked sad, why Marriotte wrung her hands, why Bowman's brow lowered as he strode away?—it was Bowman's fault, so the unreasoning child decided, and promised himself that he would spy out the cause for all these things.

All that day a perilous bond of thought bridged the distance between Harald Bowman and Marriotte Hamilton. Business took Bowman to Glasgow—he was not back for the noonday dinner, and it was not till late gloaming that he returned; he found himself striding through the village with such eagerness as he had never before experienced. When he arrived at Farden Ha' he looked first into the living room. It was empty, but his heart warmed to a little russet bodice of Marriotte's which hung upon the back of a chair; he looked at it with a sort of half reverent shyness—it was hers—it had

been stirred by the beating of her generous heart—it had been clasped close about her throat—he hesitated—then, as a devotee might approach a reliquary, went forward on tiptoe and gently touched it with his hand—it fell to the floor, and lay like a calyx robbed of its bud. He raised it reverently—feeling a vivid thrill of the boyish exaltation which had been wont to move him when he gained some new appreciation of *The Beautiful*. He went to his room, and that evening, when he came down to sit for a while with David, his face was very pale and steadfast. But already there were lines about his firm mouth which told of struggle—it is not always easy to cleave to that which is good. As he looked at Marriotte a great humility filled his heart. It was this precious vase of womanly tenderness which might be given into his hands—did he but outstretch them. An awe of her womanhood and of his own power overcame him. For one moment, indeed, as he looked at her, a fear gripped his heart, her face, with its down-drooped lids, seemed so calm, so untroubled. Had he misread the vision of the morning—the thought was unendurable. To doubt its revelation would be to doubt his own existence. As he looked at her she raised her innocent eyes and relinquished them to his searching. For an instant his heart misgave him. Their crystalline depths seemed as untroubled as “waters stilled at even,” could it be she was placid whilst he was so tost? But he banished the thought, and his love made his guess almost right.

Marriotte's eyes were indeed calm, but it was a calm instinct with the emotion of a life. Her whole being trembled with the first draught of self-know-

ledge. In a state of ecstatic balance she neither remembered nor anticipated, but waited, as the devotee before the altar, too humble to pray, too uplifted to fear, awaits the chrism.

Her gentle gravity seemed to rebuke the turbulence of his heart.

That night Bowman made many vows, betraying them by remembrance of her beauty.

He thought of David, and an irrepressible pang of jealousy rent him, not jealousy of his barren husbandhood, but jealousy of his strength and self-abnegation. That thought put the pinnacle upon his fatuous imaginings—if David Hamilton was capable of Sacrifice, for her sake, was not he?

So he lay and vaunted his own strength, glorying in it and relying upon it; but fell asleep lost in the recollection of a woman's eyes and tender brows—and dreamed—but not of renunciation.

And in all his communings this man, wise in the self-sufficiency of his own wisdom, forgot to reckon with Nature, and, like the fairy whom the king forgot to consult about his heir's future, Nature cast a gift of evil omen into the cradle of Bowman's new-born joy.

CHAPTER IX.

"A book of verses underneath the bough,
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread—and thou
Beside me, singing in the wilderness,
O wilderness were paradise enow."

A FEW days later, Bowman, returning one afternoon from the pit where he had been exploring some dis-used workings, caught a fleeting glimpse of a lithe shape against the living green of The Bloom plantation, the next instant it vanished utterly, hidden by the sloping shoulder of the Puir-wife's-braes. Bowman paused; sought for self-denial—relinquished the ascetic thought, and turning abruptly hurried up the gentle ascent of Tak'-me-doon road.

He reached the end of The Bloom plantation quickly, but never a flutter of a drugget gown was to be seen, yet the green heart of the wood called to him, and a bird hidden in its solitudes uttered a silvery note; he sprang over the dyke and made his way straight through the twilight of the trees, till he paused, seeing Marriotte within a yard of him. There was no sun, but a soft light diffused over all the scene an air of tranquillity and hush. The woman stood in a little dell, a depression like a dimple upon the green hillside. Her hands were clasped behind her, her gown sustained by the lush meadow grass seemed

to float about her in little undulations ; a fanciful lover might well be excused for likening her to a dryad, hovering near humanity but ready at the least alarm to flee away to her own secret solitudes. Her eyes were bent musingly upon the grass at her feet, and Bowman following the direction of her gaze caught the glint of water in the green.

He regarded her in silence for a moment of two, then slowly but with certitude in her air, she turned and saw him, meeting his eyes with no evidence of astonishment in her own. In after days, when they spoke of these things they remembered and marvelled. Indeed, they were both always a little in awe of the strange bond of intangible union between them, of the clairvoyant sympathy which manifested itself so involuntarily, which to the end neither time nor distance ever impaired. At every step in the journey of these two towards their appointed place one must pause and wonder for the destiny of the one seems to have had an easement upon the fortunes of the other from time immemorial—and if so—. But how vague and purposeless and vain all questioning seems when a man and woman who love each other stand face to face, their countenances radiant with mute acknowledgment, whilst about them is all the miracle of the summer's sweet perfection and God's own tender heavens overhead ?

For a little space they looked at each other thus, he from out the shadow of the wood, she from out the pellucid transparency of the day, the nearness to each other, the solitude (for they were hemmed in by the plantation behind them, and before them stretched a wide sea of grass, its billows undulating over the long

hill which hid them from the village) seemed to lend an intensity of meaning to the silence which they hesitated to profane with words. Marriotte spoke first.

"It is you!" she said, her smile was friendly, a little timid, but distinctly alluring, and if truth be told a hint of tender triumph glimmered in it.

"Yes," he said, "a bird in my heart sang 'follow'." He came forward, taking off his cap and standing bareheaded before her. He scarcely noted the little pool at her feet, he was so lost in the depths of her eyes. Was it not into the limpid well of some good woman's eyes the seer looked when he found the lost Truth?

"I saw you such a long way off," he said. "And now we are side by side—surely the days of miracles are not past!"

"Yes?" she said, an inherent coquetry peeping out.

Minerva was born wise and was deified for it; all other women gain wisdom by experience—and remain mortals only.

"How horrible the village is beside this," he went on, "I don't wonder you run away from it sometimes."

"Where is the village? What is it?" she said, knitting her brows with pretty pretence. Surely, he said to himself, here was a glad soul which forgot the grime when it was out of sight! He responded to her mood quickly.

"What, indeed! All the world is here and we are the only people in it." She laughed a little, her variable mood changed. She looked at him with piquant intelligence.

"Do you know," she said, "there is only one single spot along the face of the plantation where you can be seen from the village? How strange that you should have looked just as I passed—for I always run there so that the women won't see me."

He laughed at the accent with which she said the last words. A perilous sense of familiarity was quickening in his breast and rising to his brain like the fumes of wine.

"You don't like the village women?" he said. "I don't wonder—they are not like you."

"Oh—it isn't that, but—I haven't their 'ways.' And I would rather look on a green hillside than the village street, rather hear the leaves whispering there in the plantation than the village gossip—the silence of the sky and the night is better I think than their prayers. And yet," she went on with swift self-reproach, "How wicked I am—how cruel and mean! For they have so much to pray for, and sometimes it is hard to keep from crying out."

"It is hard to keep from crying out sometimes," said Bowman, wondering if his will would suffice to keep him dumb. "The law of one's life seems very hard at times."

Her quick, over-sensitive spirit caught at what she thought the pity in his tones. In reality the pity was for himself, but Marriotte could not guess this.

Her head took a waywardly proud poise, which rendered her well nigh irresistible in his eyes.

"Well!" she said, "the one law I know is my own will!"

Bowman liked her well in this rebellious mood, with the slumberous fire waking in her eyes, and

her smooth cheeks hanging out crimson banners of pride.

As he looked at her standing in the green field, bareheaded, beneath the sky, it seemed to him that he saw the traces of the Romany Rye very clearly. The wild free spirit, the extravagant independence that fain would deny every yoke but its own will, the figurative speech, the swift changes in mood—and thinking thus he thought of his own ancestry. He felt the romantic blood of the far-off Spanish sailor leap within his veins; like a torrent breaking an ice bridge it swept aside the restraint of the hitherto dominant English strain. For one wild moment he saw in her a gypsy girl, and felt himself a Romany, ready to woo and love in the old free fashion of his race, beneath the greenwood tree, demanding nothing of the world but leave to follow the open road with his woman beside him.

For a moment this vision shut out everything, in the next he saw that Marriotte was looking at him in the wistful way which had so sorely tried him during the week just past. It was a look to which there seemed no reply possible other than a caress.

Fateful speech trembled upon his lips, his intention shone in his eyes, but Marriotte put by the possibility of these words with a deprecating dignity he dared not gainsay.

"See," she said nervously, "you are paying no heed to the Fairy Well, though I believe it is boiling up more than ever for you to look at."

Bowman drew a swift breath as one whose steps have been arrested upon the brink of a precipice; bending over he looked into the little pool. He

could see straight down some eight or ten feet where the bottom of silver sand shone like a burnished buckler, in the middle of which a bubble of sand showed where the spring broke from its hidden source. The water was exactly level with the brink, there were suggestions of a stone rim, but it was in part broken and in part gone.

"It is called the Fairy Well," said Marriotte, because the water is always the same depth. It is never an inch away from the top, but it never brims over. So they say the fairies fill it—indeed, I think they do——."

He smiled at her indulgently.

"What more?" he asked. She blushed a little, as if uncertain whether he was treating her seriously or not.

"Oh—well—there is more. If one drinks of the waters at midnight, making a wish the while, he will get his desire if the wish is from a pure heart."

"Have you ever tried it?"

She was silent, smiling rather curiously as if at some unspoken thought.

There was a pause. Bowman became conscious of a low mellow gurgle sounding from the depths of the pool—a tiny voice this, but instinct with all the magic of water, eloquent of all mystery, all allure—hinting many things, telling none, and ever repeating its little musical cadence until of it was woven a crooning song, half sad, half sweet—the hidden bird caressed from the heart of the trees—a ripple of wind caressed the flowering grass—a long sigh broke from Bowman's burdened heart—he looked up—Marriotte's eyes were filled with tears.

He had choice only between *banalité* and complete self-betrayal—if it had only been himself—

"Do you often come here?" he asked—his voice was strange even to his own ears.

"Yes. I steal away nearly every night when you and David are smoking—" then, with a note half of deprecation half of protest in her voice, she added, "I so love the silence, the water, the wide field and the young trees in the plantation, all growing so straight and all trying to haste and be big and old—"

"I understand," he said. "You are kin to all beautiful things;" then he said, "It is in the evening when we smoke that you usually come here?"

"Yes," she said, the faintest hesitation slurring her speech. "Yes. In the gloaming."

"There are better things than smoking," said Bowman, and the next moment hated himself for the suggestion of his speech—yet would not have had it unuttered.

At that very instant a raucous whistle came to them—it was from the big pit engine which was David's charge. It seemed to Bowman that the husband had warned him from afar not to tamper with his honour, but so perverse is human nature that this thought banished all regret for his speech, and made him breathlessly eager for Marriotte's next words.

"I must go," she said.

"Ah, no——" he cried, with more feeling in his voice than he had ever displayed before her.

He held out his hand. She placed hers' in it almost involuntarily. He clasped it close. It was not a farewell nor a greeting. Was it a pledge?

For an instant their pulses fluttered to their finger tips, something new and inexpressibly wonderful dawned upon her, her spirit seemed to take unto itself wings and grow great and triumphant. She stood with parted lips, as one who listens to a strange new song. Again the whistle sounded, in the hush which had fallen upon them its raucous note seemed very near, louder and more ominous than before. Marriotte wrenched her hand from the clasp which had tightened almost painfully upon it, and with a gesture of dismissal or farewell fled like a hare along the plantation. She did not cross the dyke, but followed the wanderings of the Beggary burn, which slanted across two fields before it found its way beneath a low stone arch into the garden of Farden Ha', from which it escaped by a similar gateway.

Marriotte ran on swiftly till she reached the arch, then gathering her skirts about her, bending low, and creeping from stone to stone in the shallow water, she got into the garden, and when, a few moments later, David Hamilton entered the front door of Farden Ha', with her name upon his lips as usual, she was walking up the middle path of the garden, her breath a little hurried, her eyes dilated—yet womanlike she had gathered a few sprigs of thyme and a few belated white lilies, which she put together as she responded to her husband's call. They met in the passage to the garden, David coming towards her with a lover's eagerness. He laid his two hands upon her shoulders.

"You are fair breathless," he said, "and your heart beating like a grouse chicken's when you catch

it hiding in the heather! You should not have hasted at such a rate. I only wanted the sight of you. You know I can never come within reach of you but I must cry Marriotte! Marriotte! and indeed I say your name in my heart all the long day. I never hear the noise of the engine and the rattle of the coals for the sound of your voice in my ear—I forget all the black ugliness of the pit when I think of you, my bit of white heather, here at home. Do you not think that some day you will care? You are so good—so bonny—Marriotte, my own wife——” The man paused, his voice had been so deep and gentle as to suggest tears. His pleading was indeed a cry from the depths of his being to the heights of hers. The woman trembled before him. His pleading brought to her nothing but a hopeless sense of captivity, a terrified recognition of how much she owed this man, a sick fear lest he tire of generosity. The voices of Lizzie Lindsay and little Davy came to them faintly, a breath from the flowers in Marriotte’s hands rose with cloying sweetness. Then David saw great silent tears stealing down her cheeks, she clung to his arm, saying only, “David—Oh, David.”

He put his arm about her, this tender, impulsive, mercurial creature, who was his wedded wife; he held her quietly, temperately, tenderly, as a mother might take a frightened child to her breast.

“Quiet—quiet,” he whispered; then, “Trust me, Marriotte.”

She strove hard to control herself, knowing that again she had crucified the heart which loved her. Presently she was quiet, save for a long sighing

tremor which at intervals made her tremble against his arm. Then David Hamilton put his hands on her shoulders, and holding her from him, looked at her, at her trembling figure, at her face, from which the slow tears had washed the soft rose flush. He read in her extreme agitation some deeper feeling than that with which she had been wont to listen to his infrequent pleas. He thought she distrusted him, and a strange flush crept up to his brow.

"My own wife," he said, and his voice was very solemn, "I can do with your lack of love when you are so bonny, and so much too good for any living man, but I could not do with your doubt. You must trust me. You *must*, lassie!" he went on, even sternly. "I dare not answer for it, if you don't. If once I thought you doubted me, I—I could not trust myself!" His face grew white. He released her suddenly, and turning, left her where she stood. But a sudden, bitter penitence smote her heart. She ran after him.

"David—David," she cried, "wait." He turned, she was close to him, she reached up, put her arms round his neck, and drew down his head till his cheek rested upon hers, then she half gasped in his ear:

"Oh, dear, dear David, I do trust you altogether! You are the best man—the very best on earth—and I——" She kissed him and fled, and David Hamilton stood still a moment or two, his very heart stilled with rapture. It was the first time Marriotte had ever given him even a passing touch unsought. Alas, poor Marriotte! She was beginning to comprehend.

A little later Marriotte emerged from the deserted wing of the house where her room was. She still held the white lilies and the thyme in her hand. She stole along the passages to Bowman's room, at the door she paused, became yet paler, but finally entered. She hastily filled a glass with water, thrust her white flowers into it, set it in the window from which he had looked that misty morning, and fled from the room. But the look upon her face was not that of a woman who leaves a token for her lover. Upon her brow a pale exaltation triumphed, too solemn to be joy it hinted of renunciation, acted upon swiftly, ere impulse had time to harden in the mould of resolve. In such manner a vestal virgin might turn from the altars upon which she had offered up all her hopes of human love. A great change this from the rose-flushed defiant gypsy girl who so short a while since had declared she knew no law but her own will. Seemingly Marriotte Hamilton's life was ordained to tempest and strife, as some are born to a heritage of physical pain, and before these cruel phenomena we can only ask the question which He left unanswered, "Who did sin? This man or his parents?"

Meantime Bowman had made his way to Farden Ha', feeling a certain anticipative awkwardness as he thought of meeting David, so soon does conscience transform decent men into cowards! But when he reached the entry door he found David standing looking out far away, across and beyond the village, where the hills showed dimly in the distance. There was something of the peace of

eventide upon his face. An angel indeed had troubled the waters of his life, but one stepped in before him and stole the blessing.

That night Bowman found the white flowers breathing forth their mute message in his room. He pondered over their petals, and at length misled by the uncertain lights of his own desires, read upon them a word of hope. Marriotte's message would have been better conveyed by those hyacinths of mournful purple, upon whose petals we are told could be traced the outline of the ejaculation of woe—the efflorescence of the spilt blood of Prince Hyacinth.

In the morning Bowman placed the already drooping blossoms in the leaves of a pocket-book he always carried; they had been surrounded by that herb, which, they say, grew in Paradise, and all day long there came to him a thread of perfume from the thyme, a faint sweet breath from the crushed blossoms.

At length the day was done. Bowman was conscious of an intense suppressed excitement. He remembered that Mr. Lanishaw had spoken of driving him over to Yondertown some day that week. If he should come that evening? Well—he knew his road home again! thought Bowman, for he had reached that stage where a lover loses all sense of proportion. The lightest word or wish of Marriotte Hamilton's was more to him now than the decalogue. As they sat at the evening repast together, Marriotte was very pale and quiet, Hamilton, too, was

rather silent—there had been more than one restless dreamer in Farden Ha' the night before.

Bowman found himself looking curiously at little Davy; a strange excitement seemed to have laid hold upon the lad, his eyes shone, his cheeks were flushed, his hands trembled. Poor creature! He was imaging forth the tempests which strove in the breasts of those about him. He looked bewildered and oppressed. To be possessed by the devil of other people's temptations is a sorry fate.

As they rose from the table Marriotte turned to David.

"You will be going to have your smoke now?"

"Yes," said he; "were you wanting anything?"

"No," she said. Bowman's heart leaped up. Was she going? Surely. The next moment Marriotte spoke again, very clearly; it seemed to Bowman her words were knives sharpened upon his heart.

"I am going to the Fairy Well," she said; "I go there nearly every evening. If ever you miss me and want me about this time, you'll know where to find me. I will bring back some water with me."

"If you want water from the Fairy Well, I will bring it," said David.

"No—oh, no," she tried to smile. "The water is but an excuse. I want to go. I saw Mr. Bowman there yesterday, and I was telling him that I went nearly every night when you were smoking"—for the first time she looked at Bowman, he should have been moved by the timorous courage in her eyes—but his were hard with anger. Not only was she refusing to meet him, but she had deliberately destroyed any chance of another sweet hour by the

well, his lips tightened, he looked at her coldly, her eyes filled with tears; she turned aside hastily, but he saw them. A swift revulsion of feeling shook him. He waited eagerly for her to re-enter the room—but she did not come. It dawned upon him that she had gone through the fields, to take to the Fairy Well the memory of his harsh looks. The thought gnawed at his heart; no regret that ever he knew was more poignant.

The Lanishaw dog-cart drove up, utterly miserable Bowman mounted beside Mr. Lanishaw and they departed.

They were upon the Tak'-me-doon road, when Bowman saw Marriotte coming afar off—presently they were very near each other. She bore across her shoulders the wooden yoke which sustained at each end a pail of water, she had raised her hands, and put her arms about the ends of the yoke in such fashion that Bowman, with a pang, likened her to one who embraces the cross he bears.

As the glittering dog-cart, with its high-stepping horse, met her, she paused, for the way was narrow between the hedges, to let it pass. Bowman raised his hat and bowed low, but the high-strung horse chose to plunge at the moment, a cloud of dust rose between the gentlemen in the dog-cart and the woman by the wayside, and he could not tell if she had seen or acknowledged his salute.

The significance of this incident was almost too sad to be endured, Bowman analyzed all its bitterness, and tasted of each in turn. Her attitude had so perfectly typified her lot. Burdened by her lowly birth, her marriage vows, the heritage of generations

of impulsive passions, she was indeed bound by many thongs to the cross of her circumstances. Bowman at that moment hated bitterly every worldly advantage which severed him in even the slightest degree from her. It was gall and wormwood to him to notice Mr. Lanishaw's air of surprise when his companion saluted her.

"That was Mrs. Hamilton," said Bowman, almost aggressively.

"Ah!" said Mr. Lanishaw, carefully flipping a fly off the roan's back.

"The wife of David Hamilton, in whose house I live," said Bowman, dourly.

"Yes. She came of bad stock," said Mr. Lanishaw, with brief carelessness. Bowman had much ado to keep within bounds. Such wrath flamed up in his heart that he realized swiftly he must not speak of Marriotte casually, it was too dangerous.

It was late that night when the Lanishaw coachman left Bowman at the door of Farden Ha'. Bowman watched the glimmer of the lamps die along the road; he was in no mood to sleep; nor did he feel equal to facing the spectres which trooped to fill his waking hours in his room. Within him there strove a spirit which demanded expression, an energy which craved some physical application. He turned his back upon the house, and bent his steps along the road which Marriotte had traversed that day. He stopped at the narrow place where she had paused to let them pass, and there in the dark he conned over the rosary of her perfections.

Soon he was at the edge of The Bloom planta-

tion, where in obedience to the silent voice he had leaped over the dyke to go to her—waiting unseen but potent. He did reverence to the mystery of the summons by renewing his obedience, and ere long he stood in the little dell—O! strange dream of delight! She was there before him. Suddenly there swept over him a mysterious prescience which was half reminiscence. Surely he had kept just such a shadowy tryste before? With some woman dimly seen, whose silence was sweeter than the song of birds. What had come of that meeting? He sought for a sign—but no sign was given him save such as he might translate from the tumultuous strife within his breast. It would seem indeed that the fabric of our lives is woven from threads which have served before, and as yarn once woven assumes when unravelled the wavy undulations of the stitches, so our lives fall now and then into the old tangles, the old patterns. But it is only a momentary semblance, a touch, and the threads separate, drawn tense by the shuttle of a new destiny.

“Marriotte?” he said.

There was neither fear nor alarm in her voice as she answered:

“Yes.”

“Come to me!” and he went forward.

She did not advance, but neither did she turn away. He took both her hands and clasped them between his own.

“Dear heart!” he said. “*You know?* And you are not angry?”

“I know,” she said, softly, “and I am not angry——”

"Nor frightened? Nor astonished? It was to be! Do you remember that night in the granary of Bog-end?"

"Yes. When you came into the room I felt another pulse in my heart."

They hardly seemed to be speaking to each other. They seemed the rather to be making a solemn acknowledgment, such as a martyr might make of the faith for which he was about to die.

"Was I cruel this afternoon?" His voice had lost its calm.

"Yes. I thought you would understand. It was that broke my heart! To think you did not. I have thought somehow that you would always understand—everything." She was trembling now.

"I did. I do," he cried, eagerly. "My dear one, believe me—I see now that I understood from the first moment I saw the white flowers. But—forgive me—I wanted to argue, to plead, to change your mind to mine."

"Change it," she cried impetuously; "Oh! you must know——"

He strove to draw her closer, but she resisted. He spoke agitatedly.

"*I know.* I will be good to you. I will help you. We have a battle to fight, we will fight it together!"

"Oh, then I can be happy!" she said. "And you will not be angry with me—ever—not again? It kills me. I cannot bear it. See! I came to drink the water to-night, and wish that you would not be angry. And now we will drink it together, and ask to be good."

The simplicity of her phrase took him by the

throat. He caressed the hands he held, they trembled in his.

"Have you a cup?" he asked.

"No," she said; "but you can drink from your hand."

"I will drink from yours," he said; "and you shall drink from mine."

She stooped down, lifted a little water in her palm, and proffered it for the pledge.

He put his lips to the living chalice and drank, but there was a thirst upon his lips not to be quenched by water. When the draught was done he did not relinquish the cup.

She strove to draw her hand away from his lips.

"Let us go!" she said. "I am frightened of the darkness."

He let fall her hand. He had indeed partaken of the sacrament, but as one who drains the juice of the grape, not as one who, tremblingly and with prayers, partakes of the blood of redemption.

"Come," she whispered.

They moved away, forgetting that she had not drunk of the water, nor made the wish which was granted if formed in a pure heart.

Silently they stole down the silent road, like culprit children, conscious of unintentional fault, they entered the precincts of the sleeping village.

Suddenly the lurid glare of the blast furnaces smote their eyes, blots of ardent light scarring the peaceful bosom of the night cruelly. They were hard by the threshold.

"Marriotte," he whispered; "the heart in my breast

is like that fire in the midst of the quiet night. But its fire never dies; it consumes me continually!"

"Do you think," she said, and it seemed to him her voice had never been so richly sweet; "do you think there is nothing but quiet stars in my sky?"

And then he was alone.

CHAPTER X.

"Ah, then from Balan passed away
All dread of night, all doubt of day,
All care what life or death might say,
All thought of all worse months than May;
Only the night of joy in love
Brake forth within him as a fire,
And deep delight in deep desire."

BOWMAN entered his room that night feeling that the few words of acknowledgment which had passed between Marriotte and himself had unsealed; the portals of a new and wonderful world, the very atmosphere of which was a winey ether almost too intoxicating to be breathed by lips of clay.

He thought of her and his thoughts shaped themselves to a mental rhapsody.

O, the untranslatable magic of her eyes! The sweet simplicities of her lips! O, "maiden worlds unconquered!" The enigma of her womanhood to which the answer was writ in his heart. The wonderful mute appeal of this woman-soul to which his soul responded as did the stones of Memnon to the first sunbeam—What enchantments these were—How they ensnared him!

He paced his room in an ecstasy of exhilaration. To him, in these first moments of glorious egotism all things seemed possible, winged by this splendid elation of spirit he felt there were no heights to which he might not attain. He was possessed by that superb selfishness which would exalt the individual reckless of the cost to the many. He was experiencing one of those unique moments when inexorable Nature, busy making kings into clay, clay into diamonds, seems for a divine illusive space to be subservient to the poor humanity, which, alas! is but an ingredient in her omnipotent alchemy. We need not smile at this divine drunkenness, nor prate of reason and common sense. Joy as well as despair has its tragedies, but no cramped soul experiences them, for tragedy with her attendant train demands a wide stage whereon to play her part.

As the "dark hour which ushers in the dawn" drew nigh Bowman's vision changed. He still stood upon the heights, but the chill of the lonely summit began to pierce to his heart, and, dimly, he perceived the precipices which gaped about him. He began to be troubled. Self-denial, hooded like a nun and with hidden face, stretched out a bloodless hand and offered him safe conduct from amid these pitfalls, but he shrank from her chill guidance—the hood fell back and he saw a pale face scarred by ineffable sadness—and (as in the old allegory two angels strive together for a man's soul) Marriotte's roseate wistful face appeared, with mouth like a blossom and eyes like the pools where lilies shine, and by some distorted moral contrast it seemed that her face supplied the

direct antithesis of the other's frozen purity—yet the beam must have been in Bowman's eye, for there was neither spot nor stain on the candid brow of Marriotte Hamilton. So once more in the arena of a man's soul there was waged the strife between "the instinct that enjoys, and the more noble instinct that aspires," and face to face with what should have been the final issue, Bowman compromised. He thought of Dante and Beatrice, of Petrarch and Laura, of Michael Angelo and Vittoria Colonna. Why might not his love be like theirs? Why, indeed! Did these poets ease their passion in the plaint of their immortal verses? Did the sculptor stay his soul with his statues so that the ideal perfection he wrought in stone made good the debt of Love which never granted him one kiss? Perhaps. But Bowman had no godlike genius, he was only a man with red blood in his veins, a man who loved and was beloved—for him to temporize was madness, and, alas! he knew it.

The "night began to mix with day," and the grey dawn showed him his folly and the wickedness of it. His weary humanity rebelled against the struggle. "After all," he said, half voicing an evil thought—"After all she is hardly more his than mine, not so much, for she loves me. Why should a mere form of words—" the thought was not formulated ere shame scourged him to the bone. He told himself bitterly that he was adopting the cant phrases of all betrayers, since the world began! Sophistry for himself—and doubtless the persuasion of his victim would soon follow. In that moment shame fell upon him.

His face was grave even to austerity as he sat at breakfast with Marriotte and her husband, but all bitterness died from out his soul when the tender benediction of Marriotte's eyes lay upon his own, for in her eyes was all the appeal, all the charm, all the sympathy, all the pathos of womanhood, with something too of a tender uncomprehended trouble—as if he puzzled her. Every kindly word of Hamilton's pressed home the point of Bowman's perfidy—he realized too with almost fear that a new light shone on Marriotte's face. A certain confident happiness, as if now, despite questioning, all was well. It dawned upon Bowman that not only would he have to combat his own love, but the more subtle strength of her artless tenderness. For so it was. Marriotte had made her effort against her destiny, deluded in her innocence she thought there was no further need to hide her love, she let it shine forth in innumerable ways. Bowman felt himself environed in a radiance which shone out pure and undefiled from a woman's heart—knowing love for the first time. But for a space he remembered his resolutions and constrained himself to respond to her new gentleness with the most cold courtesy, and he was rewarded by a look of bewildered pain which dawned in Marriotte's eyes—which followed him mutely seeming to ask in what she had failed that he should be so unkind. She could not guess, poor child, of the tempest beneath the calm of Bowman's manner—could not even faintly imagine the constraint which kept him silent when he would have poured out his heart to her. The simplicity of her little kindnesses made them doubly poignant to Bowman, she seemed like an abashed

child whose offering has been refused by a churlish word.

In the next few weeks Bowman grew thin and the pallor of his swarthy face was almost grim. The villagers remarked this and wondered. Miss Lanishaw was almost tearful in her sympathy, and her mother repeatedly assured Bowman that he would never be comfortable and well-sorted till he had a wife to look after him.

"Meat pit in an ill skin never thrives," said Guthrie Fairservice, who was beset one morning by his periodical desire to fight. Tam Jamphraes, who was always willing to accommodate himself to any such desire, caught at the words, not because he had heard them, but because from their accent he judged their import to be intentional offence. (Truth to tell, Tam, like Sir Lucius O'Trigger, could find a *casus belli* in the unuttered thoughts of his fellows.)

"What's that ye're sayin'?" demanded Tam. There was more in this than print translates. Tam was an adept at the art of provocation, and the honour of the Trailfit boys was delicate. His question was at once an insult and a challenge.

Guthrie Fairservice was so near a match for Tam that no chance was lost by either of them.

"I'm sayin'," said Guthrie, peeling off his jacket; "I'm sayin' that the manager's as thin 's a scarricraw, and that meat pit in an ill skin never thrives!"

"Ye'll be a better judge o' scarricraws than o' gentry, I'm thinkin'," said Tam, putting up his fists not unscientifically; "ye're a hantle liker the ane nor the ither!"

"Gentry here—gentry there," retorted Guthrie,

circling round Tam warily. "I've seen him come up frae the pit as black 's ma faither's lum hat, and—" here Tam's fist landed and the active business of the occasion commenced.

It was a purely enjoyable affair, both to the principals and onlookers—well sustained and no waiting between the acts. Tam emerged with honours and two well-blackened eyes. His valiant soul was however beset by various misgivings as he entered the maternal presence. By some strange chance his mother paused after the first blow of the fire-hardened strap to inquire the cause of the battle, on being told she tossed aside the instrument of justice and gave her hopeful son a jelly piece, which was rendered particularly acceptable by the fact that the jelly was from the top of a bowl and had in it delicious morsels of crystallized sugar. Then Mrs. Jamphraes sallied forth and made known to Mrs. Fairservice the blasphemy of her son against the manager, whereat his mother was exceeding wroth. Thus it came about that when Guthrie (who was of a cherubic countenance and had gone down under a body blow) appeared looking (as his mother said) as if butter would not melt in his mouth, he received an unpleasantly warm reception. When Tam entered the playground next day, big with conscious virtue, he was greeted by cries of "Clip-cloots! Clip-cloots!!" and

" Tell tale tit,
Your tongue shall be slit,
And every little dog shall have a little bit,"

a chorus not exactly attuned to a triumphal entry. Tam could not find out the exact individuality of the

taunters (indeed, he was none too eager to locate the blame definitely), so it followed that he fought his way through the list and back again. This in order to purge himself of the suppositious guilt of having told Guthrie's mother. For weeks Tam went about as became one who was avowedly Defender of the Faith, and arguing wisely that an extra bruise or two would not be noticed upon his parti-coloured countenance, he indulged himself in paying off certain old but unforgotten scores. Moreover, having long had a desire to match himself against divers farmers' sons, and one or two redoubtables of The Clachan and Goosedubs, he made warlike excursions into the outside world, triumphing usually, but taking his rare thrashings with a pure delight in the science they evidenced. The teacher guessed at these things and longed to allay Tam's warlike ardour with his strap—but proofs were wanting. In such a situation sarcasm was the only relief for the tried preceptorial feelings.

"Your black eyes seem to have communicated their sable hue to your nose, Tammas," said the teacher genially one morning when Tam could hardly see past that elegant organ, so swollen was it.

"Yes, sir," said Tam meekly, but looking expressively round the school, "Yes, sir. When I have black eyes they're smittal."

The elegant English of this fairly awed the school, and the teacher realized that hardly a boy before him, certainly none "fighting length," was free from marks of battle.

He smiled, grimly, and the Trailfit road to learning was not a royal one that day.

Marriotte, after her first wondering acceptance of Bowman's new attitude of icy courteousness, fell into a kind of numbness in which she made her very soul sick with self-questioning. There grew upon her a feverish anxiety to work, as one newly conscious of sin desires scrupulously to make restitution, so Marriotte pined to recompense David for his goodness to her. Goodness which she had accepted under false pretences; in the simplicity of her soul she set herself to her embroidery, anxious to earn enough by it to make up to David for the extra expense of a wife, indeed, a half morbid idea beset her that she had brought the blight upon him, that some evil fortune which clung to her had infected the promise of his life. After working for hours with all her physical force concentrated in fiercest energy upon her embroidery, whilst her mind strove with the perplexing problem of her life, the little tambour hook would fall from her cramped and trembling fingers, she would sink back in her chair, think of David, and know that it was not by the labour of her hands that she could repay the debt of his love; and something akin to desperation fell upon her, and that passed, and left her with eager eyes and hands tremulous with an excitement she could not understand. She moved in a factitious spiritual exaltation which so often follows temporary triumph. Those who strive to win souls know the intoxication of this premature certainty of salvation, and know too the grey despair it leaves when it vanishes, as it does, in an instant. Bowman, wrestling with the subtle devil which possessed him, chafing against the enforced hypocrisy of his attitude towards even the woman he loved,

irritated almost beyond speech by frequent inquiries about his health, found his only pleasant hours were those spent with David Hamilton. Bowman realized the cruel anomaly of this and wondered of what ironic fate he was the sport. There was in David Hamilton's character an inherent strength to which man, woman and child instinctively trusted. Essentially human and virile in his nature, there was woven through his being that thread of poetic spirituality which is uniquely and incongruously the heritage of the Scotch; that strange intuitive faculty which gives an almost seer-like intelligence to the old uneducated peasant, enabling him to "see beyond the veil," indeed; that inborn capacity for abstract thought which has converted bare-footed herd boys into subtle metaphysicians. It was men such as David Hamilton who, rapt in the mysticism of their austere faith, saw visions against the bleak hillsides and upon the barren moors, and died, sword in hand, fighting to the last and glorifying the God of Battle in war-like psalms—to the shelter of this man's sympathetic humanity Bowman turned for refuge from the turmoil within, and David Hamilton loved him.

One day Mrs. Lanishaw and her daughter drove through the village to call upon Bowman. Now Trailfit was by no means unaware of the market value of an eligible bachelor, and visits to Bowman were construed as direct acts of homage from Yondertown to Trailfit. The village looked after the victoria with the two ladies in it.

"Heth!" said Mrs. Jamphraes, addressing the unconscious backs of the ladies. "Ye're set up wi' yer silks and yer satans! Think muckle o' yersels

rinnin' aifter a man that wadna look the airt ye were on at a cattle show!" With a sniff of disgust Mrs. Jamphraes watched the carriage disappear.

Bowman was at home, and when the two ladies entered he made them welcome somewhat wearily. Averse to Miss Lanishaw's airs and graces when she made the tea he asked that it might be brought up, of course with the idea that Lizzie Lindsay would wait upon them. To his painful surprise it was Marriotte who entered bearing the tray. Marriotte very pale and wistful. It seemed to Bowman that the quietude of her sombre eyes environed her with inviolable dignity. He felt chafed to think that circumstances identified him more with the two ladies than with this waiting-woman in her proud humility. He observed with wrath the condescending curiosity with which Mrs. Lanishaw and her daughter were regarding Marriotte—upon whom however their regard was utterly wasted, as she busied herself with the tray and never once looked up.

"Perhaps you will kindly fill the tea and I will serve it?" said Bowman, with the gentlest courtesy. She obeyed promptly. Miss Lanishaw (who liked to officiate) was annoyed, but she gave no sign of it as Bowman bent over her offering the sugar and cream. He made no pause, for he was conscious of a foolish eagerness to have Marriotte give him his cup. She handed it to him as he put down the little silver tray. Whether his hand really touched hers, or whether it was but an exquisite sense of the nearness of their hands (for the first time since he had drunk the water of the Fairy Well from her

palm and kissed it so wildly) he never knew, but a swift mist blurred his vision, through which he saw her put her hands on the table as if to steady herself—then :

"May I go now?" he heard her say, her voice was tense.

"Yes," he said.

She turned away, very erect she was, and more slender than she had wont to be. It had been but an interlude of a few seconds—in it there was comprehended many vital issues for these two.

"Is that your servant?" asked Mrs. Lanishaw in a supercilious tone.

Brutal as it sounds Bowman could have struck her down at his feet.

Marriotte was just closing the door, he saw a tiny segment of her pale cheek grow blood red, then the door closed very gently.

"No," said Bowman, "Mrs. Lanishaw, she is not my servant. She is Mrs. Hamilton. I hope she did not hear you. I'm afraid she would not like it."

"Oh, well! It's much the same thing, isn't it?" said Mrs. Lanishaw, easily. "Depend upon it, Mr. Bowman, she has no thought of anything else herself. Our young women of the lower classes know their place thoroughly."

Bowman felt he was in imminent danger of making a fool of himself.

The ladies nibbled their cakes and drank their tea and babbled away, well pleased with themselves.

"May we look at your treasures?" said Miss Lanishaw in a sprightly manner.

"Oh, indeed, yes," said Bowman in very matter of

fact tones. "I'm afraid there's very little to interest you, my possessions are commonplace enough."

But Miss Lanishaw was pleased to be very enthusiastic over his books, his few pictures and two or three little *bibelots* scattered up and down. Finally she came to a little oval miniature of Edith on ivory. Her pale blonde prettiness was enhanced by the delicate medium of its presentation.

"What a pretty picture," cooed Miss Lanishaw. "Is it a portrait or a fancy study?"

"It is a portrait of my *fiancée*, Miss Edith Bowman," said her host brusquely. There was, for a few seconds, a silence that might be felt.

Then both ladies broke forth into praise of Edith, congratulations, playful questionings and the other inanities thought proper after such an announcement, and Bowman listened, feeling suddenly weighed down by a profound apathy—enviored in a listlessness which deadened all hope.

Presently he was standing bowing bareheaded in the sunshine as their carriage swept away. He went within doors, the gaunt house was silent as the grave. A weird murmur woven of the echo of his own footsteps bore him company; the tick of the old clock had in it a hint of inevitability.

"*Gone for—ev—er—gone for—ev—er,*" it seemed to repeat with melancholy insistence, and Bowman fitted the words to his hopes, his love, his happiness. By a strange dual consciousness he became aware that he was in a state of mental excitement. One self seemed to look on, analyze and dissect the impulses of another Ego. Mid these vague sensations one definite impulse was strong and vital—to seek

and find Marriotte. He went to the kitchen, the kettle sung sleepily over the dying fire; the sunshine lay in mellow radiance upon the flagstones, Lizzie Lindsay, her grotesquely swollen face tied up in a little tartan shawl, was sleeping by the table with her head on her arms.

Bowman's presence disturbed Lizzie's slumbers, she stirred and murmured half awake. "I dinna ken where she is, but I'm thinking she'll be at the Fairy Well"—her voice died to a vague murmur, and she slept again.

Bowman hurried into the garden, down the little path to the foot, over the stones and out beneath the arch into the fields. He followed the course of the Beggary Burn as it came slanting athwart two fields. He was absorbed in an anticipative vision of Marriotte as he should see her again by the Fairy Well. He re-lived the scenes of their last meeting there, recalling each word, till those spoken as they parted at the threshold of Farden Ha' came back to him, then a deep humbleness fell upon him. Who was he that he should disturb the serenity of her virgin heart? How dare he bring tumult where peace had been?

He came to the edge of The Bloom plantation, he must leave the stream here and skirt along the edge of the wood till he came to the little glade where Marriotte waited . . . The real dramatic issues of life are not wrought out in action, neither can words tell of them as they are. The supreme drama has its scene in the innermost recesses of the soul. There comes a time in the lives of most of us when the whole of life's philosophy is concentrated upon one

vital issue, when "the should" does battle against the united forces of our mortal being. Such a moment had come to Harald Bowman. He looked at the young green wood before him, in all its ardent growth and vigour; he looked up at the illimitable span of the serene sky, and abroad at the peaceful fields—but he gained no inspiration to self-denial. Nature, quiescent to all save her own immutable purposes, paid no heed to his appeal. The fretting of the little stream alone broke the silence, and its' was a selfish song, telling only of puny battles with obstructing branch or stone; just beyond the shoulder of the hill Marriotte waited . . . Did he delay? He did more. For with head bowed upon his breast and shoulders bent as if beneath a heavy, heavy burden, Harald Bowman continued along the course of the stream, on between the slender stems of the trees, through the thickest of the wood and out into the solitary field beyond. Surely never a bright stream was traced by such a hopeless explorer. Bowman standing at the parting of the ways had chosen that which led away from Marriotte Hamilton, he went forward into a land without promise. Each flower they say has its time to blossom, even the bitter aloe which blooms but once in a hundred years, and each soul has its moment of triumph and self-forgetfulness—when it rises above its normal level and bursts into splendour for an instant. An unaccepted sacrifice may be as great and as purely offered as one to recompense which all the Angels in Heaven busy themselves.

Bowman went forward following the course of the stream blindly, gradually its channel deepened, he

became aware that he was entering a long deep glen. Purple foxgloves sentinelled the entrance, and the stream crept past more timidly as if not far from its native source it had not yet grown bold in the world's ways. He went on and on, the glen grew deeper, it was overarched with trees, the foxgloves in the shadow were white, one might have fancied them ghosts of departed purple ones, the stream was brown here, and crept whimpering along like a child driven unwillingly from home, a deep hush and shadow brooded above him and he looked up—to meet the eyes of Marriotte Hamilton where she sat upon a great fragment of rock.

The stream had betrayed them . . .

At that moment there fell upon these two that fatal sense of predestination which has destroyed so many. Bowman at least was conscious of a distinct feeling of "*laisser-aller*"—and he relinquished himself to it with something of the reckless joy with which a wearied swimmer gives himself over to the current.

Marriotte too had had her battle and, "choosing the better part," had come to this secluded spot instead of going to the Fairy Well—for she had fancied Bowman might follow her there, and lo! he was standing before her. She could not analyze her feelings, but a strange excitement laid hold upon her—a buoyant sense of relief thrilled her, it seemed somehow as if their personal responsibility was at an end.

Surely it would appear that by some black-magic love and fate joined forces against these two? She held out her hands to him. He took them greedily—

how much better was this living, breathing, smiling reality than his barren visions! In an instant he was pouring out in a torrent of incoherent but fatally eloquent words all the story of his adoration.

"And you feel so—for me?" she said, a look of loving wonder in her eyes—a proud humility on her lips.

"There is no one so worthy of it," he said—"Dearest girl, do you not know——?" he laughed, a little fond tremulous laugh, that seemed to her to have been born of sheer happiness in *her* heart.

"No," she said, with shy happiness, "no, I do not know—tell me——"

"I cannot tell you," he half whispered. "It would take a whole life, every moment of it, to show you—how dear you are—how—Marriotte—" he said, with so deep a feeling in his voice as to make it harsh—"Marriotte, will you come away with me? I know how much it is to ask—but we cannot go on like this—I will be good to you—I will worship you every hour of my life."

She put her hands upon his breast.

"Don't," she whispered. "Think of David."

"Think of him!" said Bowman. "I have thought and thought—but there is no other way. His claim upon you is no greater than mine—not so great—for you love me. Say that you do—say it." He clasped her hands so tightly that he hurt her.

"I do love you," she said. He would have put his arms about her, but she drew back with a gesture of half-pleading denial.

"You know that I love you," she said. "You have known it ever since that morning when I was in the

garden and you looked out of your window—but I cannot leave David—I—Harald—if you care for me at all go away.”

“You break my heart,” he murmured hopelessly.

“Mine is already broken,” she whispered back.

They stood, two poor, shaken, stricken creatures, looking at each other in the twilight of the trees . . . Curiously enough there came to Bowman a weird certainty that this was not farewell—although his heart was rent with all the pangs of parting, yet he seemed to know that not here and thus did their ways divide.

He fell upon his knees and covered her hands with kisses—he looked up and saw tears streaming from her eyes—he gave an inarticulate sound of grief and farewell and so left her.

The train which went southward in the gloaming took Harald Bowman with it.

CHAPTER XI.

“Behold, O Love ! Thy conquest is complete ;
Through every sense thy subtle forces stole,
Until they won possession of the soul,
Where all is sad and branded by defeat.
Lo ! Peace lies slain.”

It was three days later when Harald Bowman again stood upon the threshold of Farden Ha'. He bore the marks of those three days to his grave. What of effort and prayer and battle was comprehended in their passage is not for us to know—but one looking upon him might guess at the deep waters through

which he had striven to pass, only to be buffeted back to that shore from whence he had sought to escape.

Yet he had not acknowledged his defeat—but striving to measure the immeasurable had set his strength against his love. Such a battle is always to the death. The day was one of those wonderful autumnal days which sometimes illumine the last weeks of the Scotch summer. The moors were clad in a royal mantle of purple, the hillsides were clothed in a tartan of many rich tints of bracken and heather, barred by the lines of the stone dykes. The whole air was redolent of the wonderful fragrance of heather, which is like nothing else in all the world, and which all man's cunning chemistry cannot imitate. There was something in the air of Spring's freshness—something of Summer's ardour—yet withal it was a tragic splendour—"the burden of all songs the earth hath sung," the songs of sowing and reaping, of budding and blossoming, lay wearily upon the land—the fulness of time seemed indeed here, but not the fulness of content. The stacks of The Bloom stackyard were girt like a coronal of gold above the fields, but the fields themselves seemed solitary and bereft—mental and physical fatigue had left Bowman strangely unstrung—he was in fit case to be the sport of any malicious fate.

He entered the living room almost trembling. Marriotte's embroidery frame stood, as he had never seen it, gaunt and bare of work; an ague of fear seized him. The room seemed robbed of all radiance now that its brilliant web was gone. What had happened? Grotesque and morbid fears, such as

spring up mushroom-like in the hearts of lovers, rose to overwhelm him. Had his Lady of Shalott indeed finished her web? Had she laid her down and trusted herself to the dark current to take her nearer the Shadow she had seen more clearly than the others? Had—sharp tears stung his eyes, and he strove to put a curb upon his imaginings—strove to realize that all was as usual here . . . save these gaunt bars of the frame . . . against this one her bosom leaned as she bent above her work. . . . As he stood, there came to him a strain of music, it smote through the silence, died, was repeated, and again died, and again thrilled out in a succession of isolated measures of strange irritant sweetness which seemed to key up his already tense nerves to a state of unendurable emotion. Presently these disjointed phrasings of pleading and passion became woven into cadences of lyric madness, half despairing, half triumphant, with high shrill notes of ecstasy, through which every now and then there sounded, like the throbbing of a heart, a deep undertone of passion, upon which the whole musical fabric was built up. How weird is the renascent power which sometimes expresses itself through strange children such as little Davy—for it is impossible and beyond reason to believe that the impassioned Hungarian music to which Bowman listened, half dazed, was wrought out from the imaginings of any childish heart and brain. The technique of the "born musician" may express these things, but they cannot be created save by one who has known death in life, and hopelessness in love, and the triumph which is itself despair. There was in this melody (which was now penetrating

every corner of the old house), all the wildness of love and longing, all hopelessness, all rebellion—and pain, acutely felt, wonderfully voiced, yet uncomprehended—and through it all that strange febrile excitation which marks Hungarian music as a thing apart, and makes us understand how camps of gypsies listening to it go dancing mad—just as religionists fall into extremes of fervour under the spell of spiritual eloquence—for each responds to certain appeals. The wild blood in Bowman went aflame as the music wove itself about him—he left the living room, and with half-dazed eyes—as one might follow a will-o'-the-wisp into a morass he followed on after the music—past his own room, and along the corridor, till he came to the room next the tower. The door was half opened, the uncurtained window let in a flood of glorious sunshine, and dancing in this radiance was a vision which half blinded him. A woman, with bare arms and neck, swathed about with yards upon yards of gaily-broidered cloth, the floating ends of which she caught in delicate finger tips, and swayed in graceful arabesques so that she seemed surrounded by flashes of different lights—like a spark dancing in flame. Her hair was unbound, and floated about her in a dark cloud. She was facing the window, and as she advanced and receded, always in the radiant path of the sunlight, she seemed as though she danced before an invisible *vis-à-vis*, to whom she was expressing in motion the whole drama conveyed in the music.

This was no longer Marriotte Hamilton. It was a creature of flame. A *gitana* maddened by the music of Czardas—a Zingara knowing no law save

those of her own passions, no fear save that her lover might withdraw his love. The beautiful gypsy who had caused bloodshed in the parish so many, many years before, lived again in this dancing woman, whose beauty, and whose wonderful grace, were the direct heritages from the wandering race of which she was sprung. Monarchy among the gypsies runs from mother to daughter rather than from father to son, yet gypsy women have never been able to rule themselves. The music grew wilder—the dance more wonderful—she began to croon to herself—her song was all one name. He heard it—"Harald—Harald——"

He entered and shut the door.

She wheeled like a flash, her drapery like scarlet flame about her—she stood for a moment rigid—poised a-tiptoe like a slender Diana, her eyes glowing—here cheeks carmine—her lips like the buds of the Begonia they call "bleeding heart."

Then she was in his arms; he felt her form relax against his breast, heard his name breathed.

Their fate had overtaken them. Little Davy's music had led them down Death's way.

It still rang out from the tower, rang out with wild insistent triumph—but those two in the sunlit room did not hear it. Their lives were set to the tune of broken words and sighs and heart-beats.

"Behold, O Love! Thy conquest is complete;
Through every sense thy subtle forces stole,
Until they won possession of the soul,
Where all is sad and branded by defeat.
Lo! Peace lies slain."

Surely that great Angel with six wings, of whom

we are told is Love—For with twain he covers his eyes—so that he is blind to the terrors of the thorny wilderness towards which he flies;—with twain he covers his feet that our poor mortal vision may not discern whether they be scarred or no, whether he finds flints or rose leaves to rest on; and with twain doth he fly, so that he may outstrip all our poor nets of scruples, wherein we would hold him back—and does he not go abroad crying, “Woe! Woe! !”?

It is not for mortals to condemn nor attempt to justify these two. Their love was no primrose path of dalliance, but a weary way of penitential flints—if by some enchantment they did not at first perceive this, it was all the worse for them, and their wounds had grown too deep to be healed when they became conscious of them. The cup whereof these two drank was filled from no refreshing stream, it was a quassia cup, which lent each draught they drained the savour of its bitterness—a bitterness which lingered on their lips so that each bite and sup of life’s banquet was tintured with it.

The “dreams, and delights, and desires,” of all mortals are but as the votive lamps that star the dark flood of the Ganges; through the ominous gloom of the night is seen from time to time the glimmer of the little lights sent forth on perilous pilgrimages, bearing the pleas and prayers and penitences from inarticulate human hearts; the Ganges is not always kind to the frail luminous barks launched upon it, and many are quenched ere they journey half-way to the “seven mouths of shifting sand,” which deliver the sacred river to the sea, and many are consumed

in their own flames, and sometimes two, linked together by a fatal lily strand, work out a mutual destruction; and so it is that often, long ere the hospitable doors of Death open for us, even the brightest lights grow dim, and though, by happy fortune, our votive lamps have been granted smooth currents, and been dealt with gently by wind and wave, it does not become us to mock at those wavering flames which shine fitfully through tempest, and at last dip tremulously into the dark.

Marriotte Hamilton plucked no blossom from the tree of Life without leaving her blood upon the thorn which bore it—the cup of even her sweetest sacraments had ever more of hyssop than of honey.

As for Bowman—he was man and mortal.

The still-born joys of his solitary childhood, the enchantment of the visions of his youth, the exultation of his manhood, the hope of age, the mystery and allurements of Death, were all comprehended for him in one brief fiery draught.

“It is said we are all “Seed sown by God to ripen for the harvest”—which of us knows what sickle of shame or sin may be laid at the roots?

CHAPTER XII.

" Still stood he then as one that found
His rose of hope by storm discrowned,
And all the joy that girt him round
Brief as a broken song."

" The hands of God are strong to make or mar ;
And if he gather clouds about one star,
Who says that star is least among the rest ? "

DAVID HAMILTON, hasting home across the heathery moor, sought at each step for a bit of white heather to take to Marriotte. Often during their courtship he had spent hours searching thus—now his search was not less eager, his desire to see her not less keen. He scanned the heather carefully, now and then bleached bits of purple showed deceptively from some shadowy hollow, but his eyes, accustomed to this quest, never mistook their anæmic lavender for the pure perfection of the mystic white, which, throughout all Scotland, is the symbol of love.

He never lifted his gaze—the heavens grew greyer and greyer above him, the circumference of the horizon narrowed about him, but he paid no heed, and suddenly, coming upon a little shallow dell, he saw standing in it, delicate and solitary, a bush of white heather—standing thus amid its sturdier purple brethren it seemed like the ghost

of a little child, come back to find its playmates grown old and strange. Hamilton was about to gather its branches when it occurred to him to take it up by the root that Marriotte might plant it in her garden. He knew that the gardeners of Casseles House sought eagerly for white heather to transplant to the terraces of the great house, he knew the ladies of Casseles carried always a bridal bouquet of white heather when they married. A fanciful tender thought came to this wedded lover that he might, with this bunch of bridal heath, create a real wedding day for himself and Marriotte. She had been so gentle, so happy, so gravely attentive to his every word of late—surely her heart was turning to him slowly—slowly as a delicate vine veers towards a support? He knelt, digging carefully in the fibrous peat, with his fingers and knife, and as he knelt thus, hidden by the tall bushes of heather on either side, Two passed in the soft shining light of dusk, walking hand in hand, talking heart to heart; their footsteps made no sound, neither did Hamilton see them, but he heard a few of their words, coming out of the mystery of the approaching night, and giving it a voice—penetrating to the core of his being, and slaying all joy in him for ever.

The Two went on, deluded in the glamour of their dream. David Hamilton, bowing his head in his earth-stained hands, wept bitterly. Whether this salt dew blighted the bush of white heather, or whether its loosened roots failed to lay hold again upon the nourishing soil, who can say? But certain it is that next day's sun looked down upon the shallow dell as upon a fane desecrated, and saw the

little pyramidal bush withered, and its bridal bells of white smitten with a leprous mildew. Instead of a chaplet for a bride's brow, it had adorned the bier of dead hopes—and flowers laid upon a grave soon wither.

For long Hamilton knelt there, not thinking, only suffering, in a mute agony which first numbed him, and then, with renewed poignancy, spurred him back again to the knowledge of pain.

Marriotte and Harald, with the fond foolishness of lovers, had been making a pilgrimage to the Murderer's Stone, to which, for his sake, she had fled across the haunted Red Moor to warn him of her brothers' evil tryst—where he had seen her lying like a broken wind-flower at his feet. In those first days they were wildly reckless of being seen, yet so strange is Chance, so mockingly does Fate match its taciturnity against our carelessness (waiting ever its own moment to slay), that these two escaped all notice—that, too, in Trailfit, which had the scent of a truffle dog for scandal! The moon, a pale, passionless, scornful moon, grew into the sky—upon the whole heavens lay a pallor, as though the cruelties and mockeries of earth made them faint—upon every side stretched the dark wastes of the Red Moor, and between the livid sky and the sullen earth one lone creature agonized. Hamilton rose, and walking blindly in the direction which he chanced to be facing, came presently to the Murderer's Stone, where these two had so recently kissed and clasped hands. No morsel of their feast was left for Hamilton's hungry soul, no crumb of comfort from their joy was left to stay his heart.

He sat down in this place of ill-omen, and in solitude battled with the thoughts which threatened reason; it takes time for utter hopelessness to permeate the fabric of life—but his tortured heart seemed to suck up bitterness as a greedy sponge.

His love for Marriotte was such that he never dreamed she had done wrong. In so far, for the moment, his grief was tempered to him; this saved him from sheer madness.

He had heard a few loving syllables from each—he realized that they loved each other, that they had confessed their mutual love, that, evidently, they held secret trysts—and—so unselfish was this man—he shuddered lest others might have seen them—lest the bitter tongue of slander should defame Marriotte—Marriotte—not “his wife”—Ah, never, never more must he name her thus even in thought—for her love for this other man had divorced them. A slow, terrible wrath grew in Hamilton’s heart against this man, whom he had loved in all simplicity, and with a certain proud reverence for his gifts and his cleverness.

These gifts—had he not used them to wile away Marriotte’s untried heart? These clevernesses—had he not bent them to lure her to love him?

Hamilton was not the scion of a pale-blooded stock. The Hamiltons and the Armstrongs had been wont to hold their own by force rather than strategy—“their own.” Oh, bitter thought! Had Marriotte ever been his? Led by his great love slowly, along difficult ways, he sought out the truth of these things—the truth by which he was to abide though it slew him. He began to realize dimly that unwittingly

he had taken from Marriotte the inalienable right to love, which belongs, or was meant to belong, to each human creature. Surely love is the great song to which all our jangling lives should make harmonic music? It is man-made circumstance surely which creates dissonance—and makes so many lose their souls' inheritance.

Many men love only their own image as they see it reflected in some woman's loving eyes, their own perfections of which her worship assures them, but Hamilton loved Marriotte for herself. With his birth and breeding, and naturally limited range of mental vision, he could not think her love for Bowman anything else but sin, but with the humbleness of despair he told himself that he was the one by whom the offence had come. He remembered those merciless words from Holy Writ—"It must needs be that offences come, but woe to him by whom the offence cometh"—surely woe had overtaken him for his unwitting sin!

A great pity for Marriotte grew in his heart as he thought of the obstacle their barren marriage had put between her and Bowman—an obstacle which David, in his pure love and reverence for Marriotte, thought inviolable and inviolate. Pursuing this train of self-condemnation he recalled every lover-like persuasion he had used to induce her to marry him, every argument he had pressed to overcome her maidenly hesitation. He had been blind—but his eyes were opened—the gift of sight to those who have been long blind is often keen torture.

Wearily he took the road to Farden Ha'. The horror of hopelessness was upon him. A piteous and

unconscious egotism had made him believe that Marriotte, unmoved by his love, would be impassive to all other pleas.

David entered Farden Ha' that night very quietly.

Marriotte was alone in the living room, beginning a new web upon her tambour frame—just tracing the first scarlet lines.

David went up to her and laid his hand upon her head; his touch was very gentle, and he let his palm linger a moment upon the soft hair, as if in benediction. She leaned back and looked up at him, her head lay almost in the hollow of his arm, her eyes were softer and lovelier than before, a gentle gravity wholly sweet, lay upon her lips, the new tenderness which he had fatuously imagined was for him very vivid upon her face—he did not offer to kiss her, that was past (he was neither more nor less than a man because a swift shameful wish that he had been left in ignorance came to him for a moment).

"Are you not well, David?" she said. The anxiety in her soft voice was unfeigned. His bruised heart was grateful for this much.

"I have had a heavy day," he said. "But I am well—Oh, quite well."

"That's what it is to have an idle wife!" she said, and he noticed how gay her voice was, how free from the wistful undertone which was wont to make his heart ache.

"Idle!" he said. "Indeed you are far too busy. You should never soil your fingers, they were not made for it." She looked at him, knitting her brows a little.

"David—you are not worried? You have no new trouble?"

"You are a fanciful lassie," he said, turning away. "I have no new trouble." He went away soon. He thought over her new kindness, her added gentleness; his own love had made him very wise in some things; he knew her tenderness towards him now was but the overflowing from a heart so full of love that it could not contain it. He had been but warming his hands at another man's fire, his own hearth had naught upon it save the ashes of dead hopes.

Next morning David Hamilton met Bowman at breakfast with his usual kindliness. Hamilton had wrestled with himself during the night watches, and out of much conflict had plucked victory.

It had been a hard battle—but he had fought for Marriotte's sake. He told himself that at the best his attitude must be that of a dog-in-the-manger. Why rob these two unhappy ones of the one joy of seeing each other every day? Love had ordered matters with so high a hand in his own life that he was convinced it had come to those two unsought, unbidden. He felt himself but a younger brother in the House of Life; should he then grudge the heir? The heir whose inheritance he had unwittingly usurped.

Yes!—God knew he grudged him his heirship, but he could at least hide this——

Thus it came about that morning after morning Marriotte saw these two depart together shoulder to shoulder—the poor man whose name she bore, beside the rich man who had defrauded him.

Marriotte no longer bent sad-eyed above her embroidery frame. The traceries upon this new web were wrought to the sound of many songs. Sometimes she dropped her hook, clasping her hands, and falling into a happy *reverie*, very different from her old sad dreams. Sometimes as she mused thus she heard, far away, but distinct to her ear before others might perceive their echo, the footsteps of the man she loved, and at the sound faint tremulous blushes like the first rosy warnings of dawn overspread her face, to brighten into the perfect day when he called her name. For a certain space Love the Omnipotent held in abeyance all fear, all remorse, all anticipation; like a child gathering flowers upon the brink of a precipice, unrecking of the dark depths below, Marriotte caught at the joys of this perfect moment. However we may condemn her, we dare hardly grudge her this brief interval—for she bought its joys at a bitter price, and Destiny, which forgives no debts, exacted it to the uttermost farthing.

A creature made for light and love, she now bloomed forth into some new beauty every day. It was the apotheosis of her beauty—bright, but brief.

David, watching her always with his heart in his eyes, felt that such a look did not sort well with the ups and downs of life's uneven road.

He heard in Yondertown one day the gossip about Bowman's English sweetheart, which piece of information had filtered from the Lanishaw house and percolated gradually through every miners' row in the country side. This gossip paled Hamilton's cheek and sent the blood back to his heart in an icy flood. Did Mar-

riotte know that Bowman was in honour bound as well as herself? If the day came when Bowman should quit the village and go back to his betrothed—or if he should marry her and bring his bride to live like a lady in some of the great houses near by—how bitter then would be Marriotte's humiliation. To whom then would she turn if not to his love, which had never failed her? Yet great-hearted David Hamilton did not desire this, for he thought he knew what it would mean to Marriotte. Moreover, he had grown timorous about allowing his dreams to grow to wishes, his wishes to hopes—for never once had the Gods nursed his hopes to life. Hamilton is not to be blamed if from the first he never credited Bowman with the faithfulness which he undoubtedly possessed. Bowman, like Marriotte, was living in a dream, and supping of illusion. There is, however, a fibre in the masculine mind which prevents a man from being so entirely besotted by dreams as women are. Already Bowman's apprehensions were stirring in their sleep. Any repentance Bowman ever knew, was, curiously enough, not for the wrong he had done Hamilton, but for the continued deception. He would gladly have taken Marriotte by the hand and proclaimed her his before God and man. Bowman was not the man to prostitute his love to expediency. The loss of worldly advantages as against honouring Marriotte openly would never have counted with him for an instant—but—alas!—he could not offer her honour—only dishonour, in all men's eyes. He felt from the first that David Hamilton's suffering was an ill-omened corollary of their love. When he was with Marriotte the rapture of her presence put

all gloomy thoughts to flight—he lived in a delirium whose only speech was rhapsody. When he was away from her certain sad forebodings that he did not dare fashion forth in words, assailed him; upon the contrary, when they were together Marriotte was yet a little timorous—when he was absent she was rapt in a vision whose rosy aisles were disturbed by no sad spectres of doubt or fear. Bowman apprehended this and recognized with almost awe the enchantment which his love had woven about this volatile creature, so that the wings of her restless spirit seemed tangled in a net of dreams. Assuredly he was not the one to urge sad thoughts and gloomy prophesying upon her.

Whilst these two lived in the mirage of Paradise David Hamilton was learning “how hard a thing it is to suffer and be strong.”

At this time little Davy was a pitiable-looking creature; even Bowman, who had never got over his first dislike of the foundling, pitied him. His face was wan and scared-looking, his nostrils were pinched in, his eyes had a wild look in them, which roved from face to face, seeming to question ceaselessly. His habits, always erratic, became more and more strange, he rarely came to the table now, but took his food in snatches, when and where he willed. Marriotte would have made much of him and petted him, but he shrank from her like an intractable animal. He was always springing up out of some unseen corner. Not once, but twenty times, David found him in the night curled up on the sheepskin mat before his door in the passage—he always lifted him and carried him into his own bed, and there, in

the darkness, little Davy would catch his hands and press them wildly, or push his face against the young man's shoulder as a creature without speech might strive to convey comfort and show its love. All this touched David inexpressibly, David, who felt himself the loneliest man beneath all the wide sky. Concerned for little Davy's health, he forbade the boy to come to his room, and the boy fell into the habit of leaving his bed twenty times a night to steal along the corridor and listen at David's door to hear if all was well within.

What danger to his beloved master did little Davy fear? For what did he strive so dumbly to comfort him? Who was it he sometimes saw stealing along the corridor like a thief in the night? As the weeks passed little Davy's gaze grew wilder and wilder, and he got the habit of staring at Bowman from out his own especial corner of the ingle-neuk for hours at a time. The chill of winter hung over the land. A great fire blazed in the living room. Marriotte's web was drawn near it, and in the evening Hamilton and Bowman sat on either side. A strange feeling, as near akin to fear as Bowman had ever known, grew upon him under the relentless gaze of little Davy's brilliant eyes. Eyes of which the pupils seemed to grow and grow, until they became like coals with a living fiery spark at the heart.

Sometimes Hamilton asked him to play, and wonderful music echoed through that old raftered room; for Davy no longer played the simple melodies he had heard played and sung by the country musicians. Instead of love songs and war chants he played maddening minor music, such as the peasants of Hun-

gary dance to at the wine-feasts, mad measures to which 'gypsies foot it in the mountains of the Tyrol, music which has been a dance to death for many souls, music which made Marriotte's cheeks flush and pale, and flush again like a milky opal, music which made Bowman clench his hands and wonder how long he might endure its challenge—music which made Hamilton search for words to put to it that he might voice all the secrets of his yearning heart. After this, modulating with such subtle skill that insensibly the wedding music changed to a dirge, he would play death's music, which, still woven of the same melody as his wildest epithalamiums, yet seemed the death wail of all hope. The very notes which had stung the flame to Marriotte's cheek became by the *diablerie* of Davy's genius as wild a *coronach* as ever was cried over a chief, as bitter a *keen* as ever was wailed by a mother over her only son, and worse—there gradually grew out of these dirges wild eldritch laughter, such as evil spirits greet a new comrade with. One night, as little Davy played thus, and all the air above and about them was filled with cries and laughter, he suddenly brought his bow athwart the strings in such a crash that the three listening uttered an exclamation as if with one breath. The boy paused a moment, the vibration of the harsh chord humming in the violin and singing at his ear—he looked at Bowman, and if ever hate shone in a pair of human eyes it was in his at that moment. Bowman felt an irresistible desire to speak—to deprecate the intense malice in these sparkling eyes, to—but ere he had time the boy had turned to David and began to play with indescribable deli-

cacy and pathos, "The Land o' the Leal"—the very words seemed to issue from beneath his bow.

"Fare ye weel, my ain Jean,
This world's cares are vain, Jean,
We'll meet and aye be fain
In the Land o' the Leal."

In all the wide world is there such a song—such words wedded to such music? He played it to the last sobbing note—then stole out of the room. The tears lay on Marriotte's cheeks—Hamilton's heart was wrung—yet uplifted too—for in the Land o' the Leal he felt his portion sure—Bowman also was inexpressibly touched, but the air without the song was not so eloquent to him as to those two who had fitted a word to each note—its influence was not so potent over his spirit as over theirs. So jealous was he to possess every fibre of Marriotte's heart that for a moment he begrudged the possession of the same nationality as hers, to Hamilton.

Little Davy did not reappear that night, but in the hearts he left behind his music still lived, and they each strove to decipher its harmonic anagram.

The first awakening touch had been given Marriotte's better self, it stirred, though feebly, in its sleep.

Bowman never went visiting to Yondertown now, for he had no mind to receive visits in return. He hated everything which separated him, even in seeming, from Marriotte's side.

His worldly advantages, when she could in no wise partake of them, became hateful to him. Nowhere did he feel this more keenly than in church, for

next to the high seat of Casseles House, and the pews of some of the landed gentry round about (who had seats in perhaps half-a-dozen churches), the pew belonging to the Trailfit mines was the most conspicuous in the church. Cushioned in red cloth, and with heavily-bound bibles along its ledge, it expressed as much of worldly pomp as was permissible. The pew that belonged to Farden Ha' was in the body of the church where the miners sat, and there at David's shoulder, Bowman from his solitary eminence saw each Sunday the pale face of Marriotte; very sweet in its gravity; very delicate and fine among the coarse-faced women and men where she sat. Very narrow were the pews of this old church, as narrow as the dogmas of its creed; the worshippers had to enter them sideways, and one might fancy they only hoped to get edgeways into Heaven. But if the old Faith of Scotland has a stern aspect, it has a gentle bosom and arms strong to protect and uphold. Cradled upon it many a one has gone down the lone Valley of the Dark Shadow, and "feared no ill."

The rod may indeed be there, but the guiding staff is ever present, and in that humble church (and in hundreds like it, both then and now), there was in many hearts the mystic spiritual faith independent of outward symbols and emblems which subsists indeed upon divine elements. Gentle and simple worshipped here together, the dainty ladies of Casseles took the sacrament from the hands of Peter the blacksmith, and the same awe which made his great frame quiver, made their hands tremble. Now and then athwart the heads of the people, the eyes of Mar-

riotte were uplifted to the man she loved, and his met them, and, as the melancholy air of Coleshill rose between them, the bond of good or evil which united them was faster knit.

Let none sneer at David Hamilton for the part he played. Let those who deem it a *rôle* to be played by a weakling essay it. Let them night and day withstand the gnawing of denied passion, wearing blamelessly "the white flower of a stainless life." Let them morning and night crush down a hatred that grows even as it is trampled upon. Let them at noon and midnight know that the woman they love rests in the hollow of their hand, and let them deny themselves one kiss. Let them see the man who has won what they coveted and feel the muscles knit for a blow—one blow to even all—and let them hold their hand in peace. Let them do these things and they will have no time left to gibe!

Sometimes Hamilton's endurance nearly gave way, and at such times he found but one refuge—to go out into the night and stride for miles along the desolate roads—sometimes in these walks he saw the lights from lone farmhouses streaming out into the night, and he knew that to some a new life was coming, and from others a weary spirit was departing—and the ineffectual pathos of the human drama, and of his part in it, lay heavily upon him.

One night, returning from one of these long walks at about midnight, as he entered the garden he felt himself caught by the hand, and haled forward. It was little Davy who dragged at him, little Davy muttering wildly, and seeming beside himself with evil joy. In his excitement he chattered as in-

coherently as a monkey, and mid the medley of his mutterings Hamilton could only distinguish stray words—"dead," "Bowman," "sling." A sudden fear came to Hamilton—a deadly fear of injury done to Bowman beneath his roof. But Davy was advancing all eagerness, and presently, with a shudder, Hamilton saw a form lying inert, with limp arms flung abroad upon the ash of the garden path.

"He's deid!" said little Davy, dancing excitedly about the prone figure. "He's deid! We're rid o' him noo!"

"Good God!" said Hamilton—and the words were a prayer.

He stooped over, put forth his strength and lifted Bowman, little Davy standing, as it were, paralyzed at this proceeding.

"Gang before me to the kitchen," said Hamilton in such tones as Davy had never heard. "Gang before me—light a candle at the fire, get the whiskey from my room and make no noise, on your life."

Little Davy went, his teeth chattering, muttering excitedly to himself and shaking as if of a palsy. He did as he was bidden. Hamilton laid his burden on the table. A cloth cap which Bowman wore pulled low down over his brows fell off; beneath it, on the temple where the hair met the brow a blue bruise showed ominously, a bruise with blood issuing sluggishly from a tiny cut.

Hamilton's heart grew faint within him. He knew the terrible force of a stone from Davy's sling. He loosened Bowman's shirt, and poured whiskey down his throat, chafed his hands with it, bathed his head with water. Just as a black despair was

settling upon David the potent spirit took effect. Bowman stirred, sighed, half choked, and opened his eyes. With a snarling cry, in which there was bitterest disappointment, little Davy fled the room.

Bowman strove to rise—his eyes were dazed, and he did not seem to recognize Hamilton. Hamilton put his arm about him and raised him so that he leant upon his breast.

"Are you better?" he asked.

"It's my head," said Bowman, coming to himself a little.

"Yes, you had a blow."

The mists were clearing quickly from Bowman's eyes.

"From where—from whom?" he asked.

Hamilton hesitated.

"We will speak of that in the morning," he said evasively. "The thing now is to get you to bed."

"I'm afraid I'll have to trouble you," said Bowman, tottering as he strove to stand erect. "Where's the whiskey?"

Hamilton gave him more—the pungent spirit put some strength in him.

"I'll try it now," he said, then added, "Don't let me make a noise if I fall—it might disturb—Mrs. Hamilton."

"I'll take care of that," said David steadily.

He managed to get him up the stair and to his bed. Bowman had in his cupboard some simple remedies in case of accidents in the pit. Hamilton found these and applied them. Bowman in the midst of his pain and confusion of mind found himself aware of this giant's great gentleness. As clearer

thoughts came back to Bowman an uneasy look grew in his eyes. At length, as Hamilton was about to leave, he said almost diffidently :

"I think I hurt my head when I fell."

Hamilton looked at him.

Bowman replied to the look in words, "I prefer it. It would distress Mrs. Hamilton to know—to think—to feel——"

"Yes," said Hamilton. "That's beyond a doubt. But would you wish?—I—the boy has no one but me—I must keep him and cannot put him away—but——."

Bowman interrupted, flushing hotly,

"I beg of you say nothing to the boy. He has been prejudiced against me ever since the fiddle business. It was an accident, probably—I would not wish to——"

"I understand," said Hamilton. "There shall nothing be made of it. I will speak to Davy in my own fashion."

Bowman stirred uneasily, but dared say no more. Was this foundling boy going to pull down their palace of Love and overwhelm them in its ruin?

Hamilton went in search of little Davy, his room was empty, and when David stood at the foot of the tower, giving the soft signal whistle Davy knew, there was no reply. Hamilton went back to his room to get a light to search for Davy, and there found him sitting beside a lighted candle. This voluntary coming for judgment touched Hamilton keenly. He sat down on the bed, feeling suddenly a reaction from his recent tense excitement.

"Come here, Davy," he said. The boy drew near

sullenly, his eyes were dull, and their lids were contracted, all life and intention seemed gone from him, his hands hung nervelessly at his side.

"Davy," said Hamilton. "Tell me about it."

"There's naething tae tell," said Davy in an inflectionless voice.

"Davy, my man, let us speak plain. You nearly killed the manager with a sling stone. Tell me why you did it?"

Davy was silent.

Hamilton was over-wrought. The sight of Bowman lying apparently lifeless at his feet, had stirred strange thoughts in him—thoughts which had made him shudder, even as they died, half formed. These things lurk in the recesses of every human soul—let but the depths be troubled, and strange formless shapes of horror rise to haunt or appal us—sometimes to tempt us on to ruin.

The silence grew long. Little Davy raised his sullen eyes to David's face—something he saw there smote him. He flung himself on Hamilton's breast and clung there.

"I did it for you—for you," he cried, wildly. "Oh, all was well till he came. It was for you—for you." He fell into a wild paroxysm of tears, which shook him like an aspen. David gathered him in his arms feeling pitifully how thin and frail he was.

He held him thus, for long—the candle guttered out, and who could tell if other tears than those of little Davy fell in Hamilton's room that night in the darkness?

Next morning, the boy drew near Hamilton as he stood before the kitchen fire, and pushed something

into his hand. It was his leather sling, a very precious possession made for him by "Snod-fit," the shoemaker, one of little Davy's few friends.

"No, Davy," said Hamilton, refusing to take it, "I can trust you."

Davy looked at Hamilton, looked at the sling, then deliberately laid it where the fire was hottest. The leather shrank and writhed and twisted on the coals like a live creature.

Hamilton put his hand on Davy's shoulder and pressed the boy to his side for a moment. He who has little, knows the worth and sanctity of small offerings.

Bowman was very pale as he entered the living room. The bruise showed a livid blue triangle with a fiery apex where the cut was. As Hamilton and he exchanged greetings, Marriotte entered the room—a silence seemed to fall upon their hearts as they waited for her to speak.

"Good—" her greeting was never finished, her eyes fastened upon the bruise on Bowman's brow, a piteous horror widened them. She looked from one to the other of the two men, and both realized, secretly, that she suspected a conflict between them. She put up her hand involuntarily, and touched her own brow. The question in her eyes was more urgent than words.

"I stumbled in coming in late last night," said Bowman hastily, "and fell—on a stone—it is but a bruise."

"It will soon pass," said Hamilton. "See—do not look at it, you foolish lassie—it is making you sick."

She caught at the back of a chair.

"I shouldn't have come down," said Bowman in an agony that he could not take her in his arms.

"It is nothing—I am sorry—does it pain you?" she said in a strange, half-scared voice.

"Just a headache," said Bowman, cheerfully.

They sat down at the table.

"When did it happen?" she asked, as she mechanically filled the tea.

"I went out to walk in the garden," he said, vaguely.

The incident passed. Bowman never told Marriotte the truth nor did Hamilton, yet she came to look upon Davy with fear almost, and Bowman was conscious that he shrank from the foundling's fiery gaze.

And David Hamilton did not yet know the truth.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I saw Love sitting by a dry well-head;
No crown was on his hair, and in his hand
He had no sceptre, but a warrior's brand;
With blood his hands and feet and robes were red,
And ever as he bowed his face he shed
Most bitter tears"

HEAVY days were dawning for Marriotte and Harald Bowman; "Love marred by shame," lay bitter at their hearts, ready to poison all the currents of their lives. Even the malice of little Davy would have been satisfied, could he have understood the blight which was falling upon their rose of love. As the bruise upon Bowman's brow faded, there grew in Marriotte's heart, and in Bowman's, the deepest and

most terrible dissatisfaction. Day by day, there fell upon them the shadow of the curse they had earned.

“Sorrow of Love begotten, fought with Love
And bruised the mother’s breast.”

Bound fast as they were in Love’s divine captivity, there came to them dark menace from the world without—menace from which even their gaoler could not defend them.

Marriotte was very pale, and a strange nervousness grew upon her. One evening Bowman and Hamilton, sitting silent in the solitary living room, heard the voice beloved of both raised in a shrill, terrified cry; it came from above; in such moments right, and the priority of right is forgotten, the two men fled up the stairs as if their very salvation depended upon their speed—in the dusky corridor they encountered Marriotte, wide eyed and terrified, and beyond her, floating and swirling wraith-like in the shadows, some white things. Marriotte had opened quickly the door of an unused cupboard, and some unreckoned-with draught had sent the leaves from an old account-book of Andrew Gall’s flying in her face. When reassured as to the nature of these white appearances, Marriotte fell into a fit of crying, and would not be comforted. She was utterly unstrung. Bowman felt he must, in some way, lessen the tension upon her nerves—but when he pleaded with her to come away and leave all these things, she said only:

“And David——?” to which there was no answer. Yet Bowman felt, with a certainty, which was in itself fateful, that worse would come of it if they remained.

At this time Marriotte displayed an eager and piteous desire to draw closer to the other women of the village. They mistrusted her overtures, and were made uncomfortable by her English manner of speaking. Now and then she spoke to them in the Doric—then the woman addressed was insulted, and asked herself and her familiars, indignantly, if “Marriotte Hamilton thocht she wis that dull i’ the uptak, that she couldna’ comprehen’ her ordnar’ speech.” Again, Marriotte with harmless guile, thought the way to all mothers’ hearts lay through their children, and she began to make friends, shyly, with the village bairns—with entire success, so far as the children were concerned; thus it came about that Bowman, watching her ways with lover’s eyes, said to himself, that here, if ever, was the type of the true Motherhood, the Motherhood which loves and cherishes all children, the divine Motherhood, so different in its catholicity from the narrow feeling—shared by the beasts—which embraces only its own offspring. Moreover, in these bleak winter days Marriotte grew strangely restless, the silence of the old rambling house seemed to her to be disturbed by murmuring voices, she entered vacant rooms impelled by vague and irresistible curiosity, and crossed unused thresholds filled with unreasoning expectation. As she went up the village street (and she went abroad more than she was wont) the children followed and clung about her.

One day, Hamilton entering the house, heard her voice apparently repeating something—he went to the pantry, which, opening from the passage, was lighted by a little window from the living room. He

looked, and saw her surrounded by four or five children, blue-eyed, tow-headed, listening with intent eyes and eager parted lips; she was reciting to them the pathetic history of Cock-robin's last Will and Testament:

“ ‘ Gude day noo, bonny Robin !

Hoo lang hae ye been here ? ’

‘ O ! I’ve been burd aboot this buss

For mair than thretty year.

“ ‘ But noo I am the seekest burd

That ever sat on brier,

And I wull mak’ my testament,

Gude man, if ye wull hear.

“ ‘ Gae tak’ this bonny neb o’ mine

That picks upo’ the corn,

And gie ’t tae the Duke o’ Hamilton

Tae mak’ a hunting horn.

“ ‘ And tak’ thae bonny feathers o’ mine,

The feathers o’ ma heid,

And gie tae the Leddy Hamilton

Tae mak’ a feather bed.

“ ‘ Gae tak’ this richt gude leg o’ mine

And mend the Brig o’ Weir,

It’ll be a post and pillar gude,

It’ll neither bow nor steer.

“ ‘ And tak’ this ither leg o’ mine

And mend the Brig o’ Tay,

It’ll be a post and pillar gude,

It’ll neither break nor gae.

“ ‘ And tak’ thae bonny feathers o’ mine,

The feathers o’ ma breist,

And gie tae ony bonny lad

That’ll bring tae me a priest.

“ ‘ And tak’ thae bonny feathers o’ mine
The feathers o’ ma tail,
And gie tae the lads o’ Hamilton
Tae mak’ a barn flail.’

“ Bye there cam’ Miss Jenny Wren,
Wi’ many a sigh and groan.
‘ O ! What care I for a’ the lads
If ma wee lad be gone ? ’

“ Puir Robin turned him roond aboot
E’en like a little king,
‘ Gae pack ye oot at ma chamber door,
Ye little cutty quean ! ’

“ Puir Robin made his testament
Upon a coil of hay,
And bye there cam’ a greedy gled
And snapped him all away.”

And when she had finished this, she began the veracious history of the oatmeal bannock, which, baking comfortably upon the girdle, heard to its horror that it was to be eaten, and thereupon rolled off the girdle and out at the door, and became involved in many and wonderful adventures. David’s mother had told him this story sitting in the “nursing chair,” with his younger brother on her lap. A great longing to see the old kitchen of his father’s farmhouse came over David. How well he remembered it, the cupboard bed, the great grandfather’s clock with the brass dial, the four guns on the rack, the meal girdle, the pot of grease with the hare’s foot in it to grease boots with, the barrel with the cover where the oat-cakes were kept, the keys of the outbuildings, the toaster of wrought-iron which his father had made himself at the blacksmith’s, and

which bore the initials of his wife J. A. (Jennet Armstrong) and his own, D. H. rudely twisted of the stubborn metal, the great hearth with the crane and the black kettle at one side, and at the other the "nursing chair," in which his father, his father's father and *his* father before him had been nursed. The "nursing chair" was but a plain oak chair with the legs sawn off very short, a little cushion in it, a square mat before it, and usually, a little shawl or a baby's cap hanging on the back, but the thought of it brought David's heart to his mouth, and looking at Marriotte surrounded by children, thinking of his dreams concerning their future, contrasting the barrenness of his life with what might have been, it is little wonder, and no shame to him, if he turned away with tears very near his eyes. How curious is that inborn yearning for expression of which the commonest phase is the potent instinct of paternity—the importunate ego crying out to be made incarnate; translated into intellectualism, it is the genesis of all art, the well-spring of all inspiration—in one way or another we are all thralls to that dominant restless impulse which aims at self-revelation.

Marriotte made one friend, Betty of the Knocken. As she went her rounds with her green cart, it was noticed by the observant village dames, that the brown horse stood longer at the door of Farden Ha' than anywhere else.

"They're unco pack thae twa," said Mrs. Telpher to Mrs. Jamphraes, nodding after Marriotte and Betty one day.

"Yes! Betty's at the lug o' the law noo, and thinks she's the tongue o' the trump! But I dinna think

yon yin 'll gae her muckle information about the Manager for a' that. It's a curus thing tae see onybody sae upsettin' ower a thing that wis brocht about by misfortin'! For if puir David Hamilton hadna lost his ferm they wouldna ha' been in Farden Ha', and if they hadna' been in Farden Ha', Marriotte wadna hae had the Manager in the hoose. But she's a pridefu' cratur yon!"

It will be seen that Marriotte had made no headway in the affections of Mrs. Jamphraes, though of a truth, that worthy matron's words were ill-tempered rather from habit than from conviction. Mrs. Jamphraes had the reputation of having a "fell tongue," and she lived up to it.

Curiosity about the Manager was perennial in Trailfit, and if Marriotte had only talked about him, her popularity would have been assured.

"Betty," said Marriotte one day, as she stood looking up to where the old woman sat in her cart. "Betty, do you think David is looking well? It seems to me he is—not ill, but—a—" she paused. Old Betty looked at her kindly.

"It's the mark o' the world ye see on David's face," she said. "We dinna gang through life wi' oor brows brent as they were when we were bairns. The burden o' Life's gey sair on us, and the proodest necks bend below it."

"But——" said Marriotte.

"It's heavier on some than ithers," went on old Betty. "There's David—I'se warrant he disna lift his porridge spoon without pitting his wecht intae it, and gruppung it as it were a hay fork. Life's sair earnest for the like o' him. It isna for us tae come

tae grups wi' the facts o' oor lives; we must jist tak' them and no' warstle wi' them, for in the end, fecht or no fecht, they beat us."

Marriotte was gentler than ever to David after this, but it had come about now, that David did not put himself in the way of her kindnesses much. He dreaded with a terrible dread the day when some overture of his would make Marriotte betray the secret of her love for Bowman—he felt it would be intolerable to her to do this. So he denied himself what few little privileges he had had before.

In Rome there stands an arch erected to commemorate the triumph of Titus over Jerusalem. Beneath its span no Israelite ever passes, a narrow ribbon of trodden earth shows the *détour* the Jews take to avoid its accursed shadow. Alas! The arch itself is not so striking a memorial of their defeat as is that little bye-way, for it bespeaks eternal bitterness and humiliation. It is thus we strive to elude the memory of our losses, and our efforts keep the wounds open. The very pains Hamilton took to avoid a rebuff, kept ever fresh the poignancy of his loss.

One Thursday, Bowman found himself in the triangular market-place of Yondertown. There was little real business doing, but the farmers were out in force; no hearty man overlooked the privileges of the Thursday market-day, any more than he neglected the penalties of the Fast-day, both were established institutions upheld by everyone. In summer, when the great houses of the neighbourhood were occupied, the gentlemen often rode to the Thursday market, exchanging jokes with their tenants, and sending many an honest man home proud at being able to

say he "had had a joke with Mr. Casseles," or "a crack wi' the Colonel," or that "the Laird o' Lee had speired aifter the wife and the dochters." The parish minister was sure to stroll through the market, and the factors of the different estates drove in in their pony gigs, indeed, the very animals seemed to know when Thursday came, many a decent collie that never offered to stir from home on other days, waited impatiently for his master to leave for the market, to which it was his privilege to accompany him, with anticipatory visions of collie-shangies, amatory and otherwise, to make the way seem short. It was a known fact too, that the brown horse Struthers of The Bloom drove, "gaed on like a deevil," every time he was put between the shafts, except returning from the market; he came, practically on his hind legs, he went like a douce and decent beast, his change of spirit being popularly supposed to be due to the fact that (not to put too fine a point on it) the farmer of The Bloom usually went home from market a "wee thing past the bit" where sobriety ends. But no one thought the worse of him for it—and the brown horse was held in an esteem which was, perhaps, hardly merited by his every-day life.

A group of farmers stood talking near the Casseles Arms; there were certain unwritten laws which governed matters at the market, and the group in question were deliberately putting off time in deference to one of them. They had discussed (as was usual in the preliminary hours) various matters of church and state, later on they would come to local personalities, still later, to piquant reminiscence.

"What's the time?" said Struthers of the Bloom,

looking at his watch. "Mine's awa' that fast I canna coont her! Sirs! She dis a heap o' wark in a week this watch!"

"I never look at a watch," said the factor of Bog-end, "but I think o' John Tamson—ye mind he wis terrible keen on the siller, and maist mighty near the bit on a bargain?—and ae day, I mind 't as if it wis yesterday, we were comparin' oor watches wi' the toon clock, and John's wis jist on the nick, and Pyatt o' Cowrie Doon says till him, 'Ye've set her *near the bit* this morning, John!' Faith! I wis about bye wi' 't a' th' gither! 'Near the bit'—that wis a gude yin!" The factor laughed and slapped his leg at his own story, and the group began to gravitate, as it were unconsciously, to the door of the Casseles Arms.

"Ye'll hae heard ('twis the Glesga carrier that tell 't me) that Pyatt o' Cowrie Doon's son is awa' tae be a meenister?" said Struthers.

"A meenister!" said the factor, a fiery little man. "A meenister! He's fitter tae fricht the craws, I'm thinkin'! What dis he ken aboot preaching? Nae mair than ma fit!"

"It's an evil thing tae tak' mair in yer chafts than ye can chaw," said Struthers, sententiously.

"Yes. It's no weel dune tae pit yer airm farer oot than ye can draw it in!"

By this time they were opposite the door of the Casseles Arms.

"I'm thinkin' it's aboot time for oor mornin'?" said the factor—and the group disappeared within. Just at that moment Bowman rode round the corner, gave his steaming horse into a boy's care to take to the

stables, and entered the little tap-room parlour of the Casseles Arms. Seated about one of its tables were Struthers, the factor, and their friends (in those days there was no drinking at the bar—a man ordered his gill or his half-gill, and, seated comfortably at a table, discussed it leisurely with his friends). The instant they saw Bowman, Struthers and the factor were on their feet, and Bowman joined them with that air of cordial good-fellowship which had so endeared him to the country side.

"Will ye taste?" said Struthers, pushing the whiskey towards him. Bowman helped himself to a very modest *quantum*.

"Dinna' be feared o't," said the factor; "it's gude Auld Kirk."

"Soond stuff, soond stuff," said Struthers, helping himself liberally. "Gie me a gude sup o' Auld Kirk and ma turn's served. Thae sody drinks, and leemonades, and sic' like, I canna thole, and as for champagne——! Man! It's a curus drink yon!"

The factor nudged Bowman, and the others, loudly tasting their whiskey, looked pleased and anticipative. A vague memory stirred in Bowman, a memory which took him back to his first night in Trailfit, to his walk across the dewy fields with David, and to David's voice saying, "That was the night Sandy Struthers drank champagne like water"—for a moment Bowman forgot where he was, the cosy bar-parlour faded and gave place to a long, strangely-lighted room, with rows of figures fitfully illumined—from out which one proud small head detached itself, a head which since had lain upon his breast. . . . He came back from his brief abstraction with a start.

"So you don't like champagne!" he said to Struthers, with an air of great attention. "I suppose it is not popular after this?" He took a sip of the whiskey.

"Popular div' he say?" said Struthers, and Bowman could see the reminiscent spell was working upon him. "Ma certes! I ken na for ither folk, but I'se warrant it's no popular wi' me."

"How is that?" asked Bowman, and the others relaxed comfortably in their chairs.

"I hate the name o't," said Struthers, fortifying himself with a good pull at his whiskey. "Man! I aince had a maist awfu' experience wi' champagne. It's the only thing in the drink line that ever pit me fair bye wi' 't. I'll no say, but aince or twice, *at a time*, ye'll understand, maybe a curling supper or a Hogmanay nicht, I've seen me gey happy, wi' perhaps a thocht mair o' Auld Kirk than there wis, strictly speakin', ony need for, but amang neebors that's naething thocht o', and I could sing ma sang and tell ma story wi' the rest, and nane the worse the next mornin'. But champagne! Man! It's no' wise like tae drink sic like stuff! I've thocht mony a time o' a bit in the Bible that minded me o' champagne. Div' ye mind the bit that tells o' the wee book that wis sweet in the mooth and bitter in the belly? That's a hantle like champagne." Here Struthers paused and took another sip of his whiskey.

"I should like to hear about it," said Bowman. "If you have no objections."

"Nane in the world!" said Struthers, briskly. "It wis at a fine denner that wis given when the auld

laird got a graun' poseetion in India ; the dennër wis served in a lang tent on the lawn, and the auld laird gie'd us a fine speech, and the young leddies were there, and twa-three Englishmen that were coortin' them (ane o' them's married noo and awa tae Matty). Weel, there wis a bottle o' champagne set doon tae each man ; noo, for ma pairt I wis perfectly unacquaint wi' champagne, but I had heard a heap aboot it. I kenned it wis wonderfu' dear, and I kenned the gentry drank it as fairmers drink buttermilk, and wi' ma ain een I saw the young leddies and their leddy mither drinking it, and the young yins keeking ower the taps o' their glesses at their sweet-hearts. Hoo wis I tae ken that they only had the yin fill? And when I fasted it I thocht it wis fine and coolin', and it cam ower me that it wad be a graund drink for a harvest field, and I mind thinkin' 'twis a peety 'twis sae dear, but it wisna' very slockening, or else I wis wonderfu' dry, for I emptied my bottle afore the denner wis half feenished, and I said tae the schoolmaister that wis sittin' next tae me that I wad help him wi' his bottle, as he didna seem tae like it, and he, bein' better acquaint than me, said I wis welcome, so I took the lave o' his ; and aifter the denner, when the sweet stuffs and the oranges and sic like cam' tae be haunded roond, they served a drink they ca'aed *chartroose*. The like o' that I never saw before nor since. Man ! It wis fine ! I had a tumbler o't, and wad hae had mair, but it wis whuppit awa, and I never saw 't again. I never felt finer in ma life ! I wis gey sorry there wis tae be nae speakin' and singin', for I wis in fine fettle—and noo comes the mystery ! Wad ye believe

that when I rose tae come awa I found I wis mortal! Ma legs were fair useless, I couldna' manage them ava; it wis a dreedfu' moment when I began tae rise in ma place; I never kened I wis sic a hicht, I thocht I wad never stop rising. And when I did get on ma feet I couldna for the life o' me tell what road tae gang, or hoo tae turn masel' about. Noo—(no tae be backward), I've been bad afore, gey bad, as bad as need be; there wis ae time coming hame frae the Fa'kirk tryste that I seemed tae be riding twa horses i' the place o' yin—that wis fearsome enough at a' conscience, but it wisna' a simple circumstance tae the thochts that gaed through ma heid as I stood beside that table—the sneering laugh on the schoolmaster's face wis as twinty sneering laughs on as mony faces. I had a sweet taste in ma mooth and my heid wis bizzin' like a bee's byke, and it cam' ower me, wi' great force, that I must win oot o' that . . . I held tae the thocht . . . and the next moment, or so it seemed tae me (for I'm no ower positeeve in ma recollection), I fund masel' oot in the air and alane. . . . I got hame—I ken na hoo, and for three days I wis the seekest man in a' braid Scotland. Man! The way that champagne haud till me wis something bye ordnar! I walked wi' it, and I rested wi' it, I lay doon wi' it, and I raise wi' it. I wis jist fair useless a' thegither, and ma heid!! I can tell ye, onybody that had ma heid for ten meenutes wad ken what a sair heid wis a' their days! Talk na' tae me o' champagne! If ony mortal man kens champagne it's me—and I've a maist mighty puir opeenion o't."

Struthers refreshed himself with a drink of whiskey

and shook his head judicially, as if pronouncing again upon his own case; the others nodded at each other in recognition of the fearsomeness of the narrative, Bowman ordered another supply of whiskey, which being disposed of in a business-like way, Struthers addressed him affably, as they rose, "I hear ye've redd up the Trailfit colliery," he said, as one giving a compliment.

"I have done my best," said Bowman, smiling.

"Aye!" said the factor. "It wisna' oot o' the need o't! The colliers are a hardy set, but they're gude at heart; tak' them kindly and they'll tak' you kindly—ye maun jist dae as folk 'll dae wi' ye." They went out into the street; as they emerged an old woman passed, an old woman with a vulturous face. Despite her appearance, which was of the worst, there was something about her which stirred a vague sense of recollection in Bowman's mind. He strove to recall when or where he had seen her, in vain. As he looked at her she turned her gaze upon him and regarded him with eyes whose lustre had defied the mists of time—he saw that the iron-grey hair about her brows was fine and abundant, a curious apprehension grew in his heart, fulfilled, as Struthers said, with an unconcealed gesture towards the woman.

"Yon's your landleddy's mither."

Bowman made some answer—he did not know what—his every faculty was absorbed in a search for identity between the two women—with a sigh of relief he relinquished it as the woman slowly passed, he had found no identification save in the accidentals of physical traits.

He left his late companions with a somewhat uncertain *adieu*, he was wondering how Marriotte, with all her sweet-souled generosity, had come to be the daughter of such an evil-looking hag—he was pondering upon the marvels of atavism, when turning a corner he came upon an ugly spectacle. In the very narrow street stood a heavy dog-cart, its progress blocked by the person of Marriotte's mother, who, with malignant ill-temper, stood before the big bay horse, and called out jibes at its driver—her shawl, which she had worn over her head, had fallen back, and a loose coil of disordered grey hair, fine as floss silk, trailed over her shoulders; a glance at the elderly man in the cart was sufficient to identify him as the father of David Hamilton; just as Bowman drew near the pair the woman uttered some apparently unendurable taunt, the choleric face of the old man flushed deeply, with an oath and an epithet he tightened the reins—the mettlesome horse reared and sprang forward. . . . Bowman was in time to drag the woman from out under its feet—even ere she had regained her balance she was pouring out a torrent of abuse and ridicule upon the man disappearing in his cart. A vile odour of vile liquor surrounded her—she looked at Bowman unabashed.

"Tell ma dochter ye saved her mither frae being run ower wi' her gude-faither's dog-cairt," she said, "and mebbe she'll pay ye for 't."

Bowman felt his face blanch—he had a terrible feeling of having opened a door which Marriotte would have had closed. The old woman's voice changed to an abominable whine.

"Hae ye a shillin' or twa ye're no needin'?" she asked.

"No," said Bowman, looking at her with undisguised repulsion—he turned and walked off rapidly.

"If I wis as young as Marriotte ye wadna' be sae hard-up, I'm thinkin'!" she called after him, with an eldritch laugh.

Entering the market-place again he encountered the factor of Bog-end once more—he was in a facetious and familiar humour—he nudged Bowman with his elbow.

"Ah-ha!" he said. "So ye were looking aifter auld Marron Hogg? Hamilton o' the Dykes is cursing her black and blue the noo, he says that he wad hae run ower her if it hadna' been for you. Man! That wad hae been a maist awfu' job! For the auld witch comes tae the market Thursday aifter Thursday and casts up tae him that his son is workin' wi' the miners, and it's a kened fact that auld Hamilton's neither tae haud nor tae bind when he's raised. Whaur douce David Hamilton get his gude temper frae naebody kens, for it's certain he didna' get it frae the Hamiltons. Weel! It's little wonder Hamilton o' the Dykes wis pit aboot when his son mairrat the dochter o' that auld witch—the weemen o' her bluid are a' bad—the bad's born in them——"

"Mrs. Hamilton is——" began Bowman, more excitedly than he knew—the factor interrupted him with easy-going, maddening conviction.

"Gie her time—gie her time," he said, and catching sight of someone, went his way.

Bowman got his horse and rode quickly from Yondertown. A soft drizzling rain was falling—ethereal

mists floated on either side the country road—the shadows of the hills in the distance were velvety and very dark—it was a day when a soul at peace feels a deeper peace descend upon it—a mild day, the gentleness of which tempered the rigours of winter with a forecast of spring. But for Bowman it held no peace, no promise. Yet, as he entered the door of Farden Ha', his steps turned with unconscious quickening towards the living room, where he knew Marriotte would be—and there he found her—and she looked up at him, and smiled, and her smile was as the bow set in the clouds—and for a little time they talked together. Marriotte's eyes held shadows of sweet dreams, and, what was rare of late, her brow was calm and untroubled. Bowman cherished the memory of those moments for long.

The next morning at breakfast time Bowman's love-quickened eyes saw that the temporary peace had departed from Marriotte's eyes, a brilliant rose flushed and paled upon her cheeks, her hands trembled as she poured the tea, and every now and then she paused expectantly, as if listening for some sound, yet when any sound came from the kitchen, where Lizzie Lindsay was at her work, Marriotte started violently, and when a harsh scraping noise announced that little Davy was "scarting a pan," she gave a frightened exclamation. Hamilton noticed her nervousness, and endeavoured to make talk to divert her from herself.

"It's a wonderful thick mist to-day," he said. "I do not think there's been such a one since the day you went out in the garden and nearly caught your death."

"Yes," she said, looking at the window, beyond which even the garden wall could not be seen. "Yes—the mist 'll be heavy on the hills to-day."

"Have there ever been any accidents in the fog hereabout?" asked Bowman.

"Yes—once or twice a shepherd has been lost in the Red Moor," said David; "but not in our time." Though all three strove to talk the meal was finished in silence, and Bowman and Hamilton left for the pit earlier than usual. All morning the same restlessness was upon Marriotte's spirits. At noon she ate nothing—the mist had drawn a close and stifling curtain about the house; the room was gloomy, in the half-light the scarlet embroideries upon Marriotte's web were of the colour of blood; from time to time the eyes of Bowman and Marriotte met—each seemed full of startled question; when the men again departed Marriotte stood watching them till their figures were first blurred, then obscured by the mist—there came a strange fancy to her that the mist had robbed her of them—a sense that it was ominous to her grew upon her—a feeling that she was caught as in a gin by its impalpable bonds; she remembered the revelation of that other misty morning—was she to pay the price for that joy to-day? Her thoughts grew more and more fanciful—she would not stay submissive beneath this white menace, she would go out into it and search for the evil it concealed, she would not sit supinely waiting to be overwhelmed. Her inchoate thoughts shaped themselves to action—she went out of the house, and going through the mist, as if forcing her way through the ranks of opposing enemies, she took the Tak'-me-doon road,

and was soon at the top of the Puir-wife's-braes. She turned towards the Knocken farm, but, as if in typification of her destiny, her feet soon tired of the road, and she left it, reckless of the danger of such a proceeding, and took to the moss and heather. She pursued her aimless course heedlessly yet eagerly, an instinct of search and daring was upon her—but the mirror of her soul gave back a faint prefiguration of fear.

She went on and on, until, sounding heavily through the mist, she heard the water leaping over the linn into the Red Glen; she paused beneath the pall of white which clung so closely to the earth; it seemed to her that she was sensible of a certain Spring-like vigour, as if the earth was quickening to a new birth. She heard the noise of cattle passing unseen, the bleating of an early lamb sounded from far away. . . . Close beside her an unseen bird uttered a love-note—such a silver bubble of sound as birds shake out in Spring—following it immediately came a raucous blast from the pit engine, like the echo of the one which had disturbed Bowman and her at the Fairy Well. . . . Marriotte Hamilton stood still with a face grown ghastly, for interwoven with the bird's love-note and the engine's shriek she had heard another voice. . . . The first tremor of a new life had added its vibration to the pulsing chord of humanity. . . . O! Terrible song! How intolerable is the joy and anguish of your words—the syllables of which are lives! . . .

She turned and fled wildly through the mists, which, as she cleaved through them, closed behind

her; nor was there any trace of her passage, though each foot of the way was marked by a new anguish . . . all thought was merged in feeling, all feeling was pain . . . she fled on with the wildness of despair—towards the place from whence came the sound of the falling water. She became conscious that someone was following her, someone unseen in the mist; yet who would be abroad on the desolate moor save one like herself? Surely there was no other like her in all the world? A certain faintness came over her. Was she pursued by some grisly spectre of the moor? She knew she was drawing near the linn, at the foot of which was the bottomless pool—her goal. The way was roughened by a few stones, she stumbled forward—neared the edge, and was poising for the leap, when the mists were torn asunder, a strong arm caught her, and held her back . . . when Marriotte opened her eyes she lay among the stones on the moor, and the kind, wise eyes of old Betty of The Knocken met hers.

"Puir bairn, puir bairn," she said; "did ye no ken that ae' sin never richts anither?"

"Was it you who followed me?" asked Marriotte.

"Yes. I wis seekin' ma young calves that are strayed in the mist, and I heard yer voice as ye passed." Marriotte had not known that she had spoken—in what words had she voiced her realization of doom? She never knew; but she saw in Betty's eyes full comprehension and infinite compassion.

"Listen!" said Betty. "It's a wonderfu' thing, but I've seen it, oh! so often. There's a price upon everything in this world, there's a price upon love,

and freendship, and faithfulness, and, there's a price upon Sin. It's bocht and sold like a' else i' the world, and the price is punishment, punishment in ae shape or anither; it's weel tae think o' that aforehand, but we're maistly like a wastefu' wife that disna' speir the price afore she buys—and I've noticed, and kenned ta ma sair sorrow, that the langer it is before oor acoonts are sent in, the heavier they are tae settle; ye've sinned, and ye're tae suffer. Are ye thinkin' tae add sin tae sin by no payin' yer debt? Dinna be sae left tae yersel'—ma puir bairn, there's sair interest put on unrepented sins! Be thankfu' if wi' a sair hert and a repentant soul ye can pay yer debts in this world, and no tak' them wi' ye tae the next."

Marriotte caught the hands of this homely missionary.

"Oh, Betty," she said; Oh, Betty"—but words failed her.

The old childless woman drew the beautiful head, all beaded with the mist, down upon her bosom—and murmured over it loving words of strength and comfort. It was a stern doctrine old Betty preached—but with such we are healed.

And thus, amid the desolate wastes of the haunted Red Moor, pillowed upon the kindly bosom of the woman her mother had robbed of her one lover, Marriotte Hamilton resolved to offer her suffering and patience as an acceptable offering for her sin.

That night, while a wild wind wailed eerily round the old house, Marriotte told Bowman. The man fell at her feet, grasping wildly for her hands, her

garments—kissing them—bitter tears gathered in his eyes, and he was stricken dumb.

"Harald——" she said. All that love can utter was in that name. Forgiveness, affection, abnegation—the man rose and took her in his arms, and they wept together.

If ever a poor mortal endured in the narrow limits of humanity the agonies of Gethsemane, that one was Harald Bowman that night.

After the first shock of realization his manhood had risen to take its share of responsibility, and the one issue he saw was for them to go away together.

To his horror and bewilderment Marriotte refused absolutely.

Old Betty's words combined with the fatalism of her gypsy blood bound her to this spot, with intangible but unbreakable bonds. When David had been ruined she had insisted upon remaining in Scotland to meet her Fate—now she was strangely constrained to remain and "dree her weird," as had been appointed to her. In vain Bowman pointed out the inevitability of disaster—she seemed to realize it as fully as the soldier does the peril of the forlorn hope—but she did not waver.

At length Bowman, recognizing an influence over her spirit, against which even his love might not prevail, left her—to the first of many long nights of anticipative agony.

So these two waited.

And the only earthly hope for them lay in the sorely-tried righteousness of David Hamilton.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds."

"Partir c'est mourir un peu
C'est mourir à ce qu'on aime ;

"C'est toujours le deuil d'un vœu,
Le dernier vers d'un poëme ;
Partir c'est mourir un peu
C'est mourir à ce qu'on aime."

MARRIOTTE HAMILTON had many long hours in which to realize her position, analyze its significance and taste of all its bitterness.

But in a nature such as hers good resolves are flame-like, and sweep as a purifying fire through all the chambers of life, relighting the fire upon the neglected altars, and destroying the tawdry hangings of selfishness and indulgence which we hang before the windows to soften the too searching light of Truth.

Betty's saying that "everything has its price," had awakened in Marriotte a long train of thought, not very logical in sequence perhaps, and not based upon too profound premises, yet honestly and painfully built up to a conclusion which sanctified the faulty ladder by which it had been reached.

Marriotte set herself to run with patience the race set

before her, remembering that if the way was difficult she herself had strewn the thorns which pierced her—relying upon Betty's words as upon dogma, Marriotte clung to the thought that by patiently discharging her debt of suffering, she might in a measure appease the angry fates; not that she would have expressed her feeling thus, for, indeed, she had not even the poor satisfaction of framing a phrase to fit her faith, this woman had had words with which to deny and to grant—she had none in which to express the sum and substance of her works; so it came about that when moods of physical nervousness and mental depression shattered her resolutions she was left wandering, a blind soul mid chaos, with no strengthening formula as a talisman against despair.

It is easier—much—to repent of a sin which has grown abhorrent, or has been rendered impossible to us, than to abjure what remains the very dearest dream of life. Retrospective repentance is a much more facile lesson than present penitence.

It must be said that fear for herself was no factor in Marriotte Hamilton's philosophy—long ago men and women bartered their lives lightly for a kiss, we have grown colder-blooded now, but in Marriotte's veins there pulsed a full and generous tide ready to pour itself out to the last drop at Love's feet. There was once a tale of a fearsome man who kept himself ever young by drinking the blood of young men and maidens. Can this be the secret of Love's eternal youth? Whilst often Marriotte had rebelled against the burden of an existence she had not desired, there was no ignoble or impatient rebellion now, but

an acceptance of her burden, a sense of its sacredness, which under any circumstances would have been touching in the extreme. She had her moments of despair when she clung to old Betty, and wept till the shrunken bosom of the old woman was warmed with her tears.

There comes from the far-away mountains of Western America a strange flower called the Resurrection Plant. Kept out of the ground for years, denied water, shrivelled into a sapless ball, it possesses wonderful vitality, for, placed in a glass of water its fronds uncurl, and stretch towards the light, its tendrils grow green, its leaves uncoil to the last tiny edge; it lives; thus it was with the starved instinct of maternity so long dormant in old Betty's bosom—given the impetus of Marriotte's great need, it quickened and grew, manifesting itself in a thousand ways, tender ways—subtly inherent in womankind, ways which never need to be learned and which can never be forgotten.

Now and then Marriotte was beset by a thought which she was inclined to regard herself as a direct temptation of the Evil One, but to which she turned every now and again, with wistful longing. Marriotte knew nothing of the Catholic religion. She had regarded it as all untutored Protestants do, with horror, not unmixed with fear. She had a vague conception of dreadful mysterious penances, a childish distorted idea of subtlety and guile that feared no law, but she knew or thought that Catholics prayed to the Virgin, and the thought came to her again and again that it would be comforting to address herself to a woman deity—she had no thought of impiety

in this—that she put the idea behind her is sufficiently sad.

But whilst Marriotte grudged no jot or tittle of her own penance, she was driven to the verge of distraction by thought of what she had brought upon David. In all honesty she did not fear his anger, but his pain. Moreover, she asked herself how she was to abide the rebuke of David's eyes—knowing what she did. She knew what his friends had said to him of her, she had justified their most bitter prophecies, under circumstances more inexcusable than they could imagine. Chastened as she was she yet felt more horror of the shame she was bringing upon David than of her own humiliation. She asked herself with piteous reiteration what David had done to deserve such a fate as she had meted out to him. No skilled pleader could have presented David's case more poignantly than she did to herself. Grain by grain, a slow resolution was building in her heart—a resolution of confession. David was to be her earthly judge, and she cherished the thought of rendering herself up to justice instead of waiting, cringing, till it found her out. Of this, however, she breathed no word, though old Betty (in whose religion confession counted as a very potent means of grace) hoped always that Marriotte might make use of it, yet the old woman trembled as she thought of the outraged husbandhood and the vengeance it might take.

Bowman, from time to time, renewed his pleas to Marriotte that they should go away—but little by little he grew to apprehend that this woman's place was here—that she was a piteous Andromeda, fettered by birth and circumstance to await her doom. So

there ceased to be any question between them, and they waited. The only thing Bowman feared was parting. Life or death with her had been equally sweet to him.

One incident occurred which cut them both to the heart; Bowman had never seen his uncle or cousin since he came to Trailfit first, for his uncle's health demanded a long sojourn in Madeira or Algiers each winter, and the father and daughter had departed before Christmas for the South. There had been some talk of Bowman joining them in Algiers, but ere the question was mooted he had given himself over to Marriotte's perilous spell, and to leave her, voluntarily, was a thing he scorned thought of. Soon after Marriotte's apocalyptic vision on the Red Moor, Bowman received a letter announcing the re-opening of the Sussex house, and asking him to come to England without delay. He mentioned the matter at the table—merely to make talk. He had no thought of going, yet his words seemed to hint of some such intention. Marriotte raised her eyes and looked at him. In such fashion The Master looked at Peter . . . It was but for the briefest second that their eyes met, yet it sufficed for him to see ineffable question in hers, for her to read the passionate negation in his. Afterwards they never spoke of it—yet the memory of it was a serpent-thonged scourge to each. Amid all the gravity and hopelessness of their position, their love was yet so potent that the slightest mutual misunderstanding outranked in bitterness all the menace of Fate.

The women with whom Marriotte had striven to make friends were now, in their undemonstrative

fashion, friends indeed, for a whisper had crept from lip to lip, and Marriotte seemed nearer to them now than ever before. When they saw her talking to their children, they said "Puir Marriotte!" and invented kindly excuses for sending their little ones on errands to Farden Ha'. Somehow, now that Spring, "the child of many winds," was softening the face of the earth and quickening it into flowerful smiles, Farden Ha' seemed more gaunt, more gloomy, more isolated than ever before—the fresh leaves on the ivy did not avail to give it any semblance of beauty—its old stones seemed more rugged than ever against the tender skies and silvery clouds of Spring; the damp days, too, brought out upon the walls strange stains and discolourations—one of these above the doorway was very curious, showing like a great blotch of blood over the threshold where David Hamilton and Harald Bowman had met first.

"It's a dreary barn o' a hoose for a bairn tae come hame tae," said the women among themselves, looking round with satisfaction at the untidy two rooms which made up their homes. Time wore on.

A terrible anxiety consumed Marriotte lest David, whose eyes were blinded by his trust in her, should learn the truth by some well-meant speech.

Each time he left the house she watched him out of sight, wondering in what vengeful mood he would return, each time she heard his foot upon the causeway she braced herself to meet the lightning of his disdain, but she found his face always the same, grave, steadfast and exceeding sorrowful. Chance, which had played this woman so many sorry tricks, was kind to her in this. It is one of the bitter compensa-

tions that the fate which permits and aids us to err, presents cruel opportunities of repentance. At length Marriotte told Old Betty of her intention. The old woman was glad with a sort of solemn joy, but her spiritual exaltation did not make her forget her worldly wisdom.

"Ye maun get the manager oot o' the hoose, or there'll be murder din," she said. Unspoken, unformulated, this knowledge had lain in Marriotte's breast, choking the regenerating stream which was to purify her. Put into words thus promptly it seemed to gain in tragic importance, and to assume the relentless front of inevitability. There came to Marriotte Hamilton then the supreme temptation to fly away and be at rest, secure in Bowman's love, forgetting the grim house, the sordid village—her shame turned to glory by her lover's worship—forgetting the days of agony, re-living the hours of rapture, forgetting winter, remembering the promise of spring. Forgetting—David—and from this ordeal also Marriotte Hamilton escaped "as a bird from the net of the fowler," there remained before her now the task of sending Bowman from her—and one day she faced it. When she told him he was to go, and he looked into her eyes and saw in them the fixed light of despairing resolution, all the man in him rose up against the thought of leaving her. It was intolerable—to leave her alone to bear all! The piteousness of it took him by the throat.

"I will not go!" he cried. "Do not ask it."

"Harald!" she said.

Once before she had said his name thus—in supreme forgiveness—now she uttered it in supreme appeal.

He saw the solemnity of her resolution, and a terrible thought grew in him that she meant to destroy herself.

"Marriotte!" he whispered. "You mean yourself no harm? You——" His voice died—stifled by what he was striving to put into speech.

"No," she said; "I shall not kill myself." She spoke the words with such an accent! As if voicing something so familiar that it needed no lowered voice or slurred syllables to put it into words.

Bowman shuddered.

"I cannot go," he said; "anything but that!"

"In that is everything," she said—she grew very pale; "I cannot bear much more," she whispered. "To have you deny me——!"

He caught her in his arms.

"Heart of my heart. Do you not know that I cannot do this thing? Do you not see that common decency forbids me to leave you here to face all? By some cruel destiny I cannot suffer for you, but I can at least stand between you and the world. My self-respect, my manhood, my honour, demand that I remain and—God in Heaven, child! Do you think I can bear to leave you now?"

"Dear," she said, and put her hand upon his hair with a familiar timid caress, which wholly unmanned him.

"I know how you feel—but see—I ask it boldly. Will you not give me your self-respect, your manhood, your honour? Lay them down for me—go away, as I ask you. Are your ideas of these things to stand against my wish—*now*?" The slight emphasis upon the last word lent it intolerable eloquence.

"But to part! And I must not leave you alone."

"Old Betty will be here, and Harald—do not wrong David in thought—you know—just now—he——" She stopped, more agitated than she had yet been—for the veil upon the face of her fear was growing very thin, and she knew that very soon she must face the Unknown—and the thought appalled her.

"Must I then leave you—is it your unalterable wish? My rose—my darling—what sorrow I have brought upon you."

"No," she said gently, though the tears were running over her face—"we have supped together of joy, and this bitter cup must be drained by both."

"Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring; it was their last hour,
A madness of farewells."

We cannot and dare not follow them into the labyrinth of griefs in which they strayed bewildered. For, despite all, they trod on holy ground. As flowers spring from foulness, so there had sprung up from their sin a holy and beautiful love. There had been between them no artifice of pride or passion, no feigned offence to be righted with reiteration, no bartering of empty vows—no jealousy, no distrust, each gave freely, and each received full measure, heaped up and running over. Each saw in the other full perfection—and they were parting. . . .

"Dear," he said, very simply, looking into her eyes as she stood clinging to him. "Have you ever by a thought blamed me?"

"Never," she said—meeting his gaze with pure love in her own.

For a little they stood thus, their very souls commingling, their faces grown haggard—then came a few whispered words, at which we dare not guess, and he was gone.

As Bowman fled blindly down the corridor he met Old Betty.

"Go to her," he said, half distractedly.

"It's no' a time tae gang till her the noo, puir bairn!" said Betty, solemnly. "She's alane wi' her Maker." Betty was wrong. Marriotte was alone with the vision of the man she loved, and the devil who tempted her to go away with him.

"She has made me promise to stay till she sends for me," said Bowman, "and I must abide her wish, but I implore of you to send for me if—if there is need of me—if she needs me——" The old woman looked at him with an infinitude of compassion in her dim old eyes.

"There'll be nae need o' that kind," she said; "but if there should be, I'll send for ye. Death breaks a' vows, and I think the gude Lord, wha' wis a 'Man o' sorrows, an' acquainted wi' grief' wadna be affronted if ye cam' till her then—I ken the comfort o' last words——" A groan, impossible to repress, burst from Bowman. Betty laid a withered hand upon his arm.

"Take hert!" she said; "dinna mak' an idol o' yer grief. Trust tae me tae bide wi' her—and, sair though it be, stay you in England till she sends you word to come back."

Half an hour later Bowman went through the village carrying his bag. The women nodded approvingly as they saw him thus equipped for a journey,

they thought that they appreciated his reasons. He stopped at the pit, and went to the shed at the pit-mouth, where David stood by the great engine which was his charge.

"I am suddenly called to England," he said to David; "I want to leave my address, and how I can be got at best if I'm needed for any reason." He gave David his address, beneath which he had written instructions as to finding him, the trains and the changes necessary. This was his concession to his trampled pride, which ached sorely at the imposition put upon it.

He took David's hand and held it a moment. A rebellious query as to whether this man had defrauded him, or he this man, made his heart hot within him.

"Good-bye, Hamilton," he said. "I'll be back before long, but if anything special is wanted, you know and can tell any one where to find me."

"Yes," said Hamilton, gravely; "I hope you'll have a safe journey."

He looked at Bowman as he said good-bye—Bowman met his gaze calmly. No eyes held any terror for him since he had seen Marriotte's glazed with the anguish of farewell. Hamilton felt a wave of his old affection for Bowman sweep over him—they had both suffered! His farewell was kindly, if grave.

It was but a step from the pit to the railway station, and the train was in. Bowman entered an empty carriage, and stood at the window striving to catch a glimpse of Farden Ha'; for a moment he saw its tower clearly, and he knew that from its topmost window Marriotte would watch the train till the last shred of its smoke vanished in air. As the

train gathered impetus he fell back in the seat, sitting staring before him in a trance of pain—and at the same moment, Marriotte Hamilton, having climbed higher up the old stairs than was safe to peer out after the train from the topmost casement, turned to find little Davy standing close behind her; an extraordinary excitement was in his eyes, his face was working—for a moment she looked at him fascinated, and strangely thrilled by the terrible delight she saw upon his countenance. He caught her sleeve, she felt the fire of his thin hand through her dress.

"Is he never coming back?" he asked.

"Never," she said.

"Ye're sure?"

"I'm sure"—Davy turned and fled—and she knew he had gone for his violin, and ere she had finished descending the tower stairs, he passed her, going up again, and before she got the door at the foot closed she was assailed by wild triumphant music, with such joy in it as made her heart sick.

That night as dusk fell Old Betty re-entered Farden Ha', for she felt she must be near at hand when Marriotte made her confession—lest worse come of it. Marriotte, waiting breathlessly till the little household should have stilled itself to sleep, felt an almost unendurable reaction when Adam Patheron, of the Lone Rigg cottage, entered with a gift of plovers' eggs, and having presented them, sat himself down to enjoy the whiskey which David produced. Adam was noted far and wide as the most skilful poacher in the parish. It is a curious fact that the Scotch conscience, which strains at hymns, swallows hares,

albeit poached, with no apparent discomfort. Adam's other measurements might not be widely known, but one thing was certain, his fist was the exact height for a rabbit snare—and his hand, with the thumb open, was an unfailing and accurate gauge for hares. There are worse things than hare-soup—so his neighbours thought when, with a pawky look, he would produce a hare from some unostentatious but huge pocket, and give it, explaining that as he was "taking a daunder wi' the gun," he saw "a queer-like beastie wi' lang lugs sitting aneth a tree, very woefu' and disconsolate like, and had taken peety on it, and gien it a wheen draps lest a dog micht come by and harry the puir thing." After a hare had received a few "drops" of lead from Adam's gun it was relieved of fear from the harriers. It is only disreputable poachers who are prosecuted—it was a known fact that Adam, inviting the owner of the shooting into his cottage, and that gentleman, having some curiosity *à propos* of this wily poacher, consenting, Adam set before his guest a fine hare soup, which the owner of the hare enjoyed to the extent of three platefuls, and then gravely praising it, asked the receipt, which Adam gave in minutest detail, excepting only the hare. It was all "keep the bluid" and "scrape the banes," and when the gentleman, with as sly a look as Adams', asked what meat Adam recommended for the soup, Adam said easily, "Jist onything that the cook see's rinnin' about the pantry frae July tae Mairch"—whereupon the gentleman produced his own flask, and the two partook of it like "bluid-brithers," as Adam said. Adam had fond recollections of glorious enterprises, such as the night when

he bagged eight hares one after the other as they entered his turnip field, "Fine fat yins, fed on the Puir-wife's-braes." All things considered, it was little wonder that the hares decreased in numbers, were in fact, as Adam frequently said, with an air of innocent surprise, "all but extirpet." Adam's contempt for white hares ("bluidless fusionless veesions") was only equalled by his contempt for English gamekeepers. He was holding forth to David about a certain gamekeeper who set his rabbit snares from the fence in instead of working from the field to the fence.

"I ken na aboot yer English hares," he said, sucking his whiskey slowly over his palate as a Frenchman does his coffee, "but ye'll never tak' twa Scotch rabbits in the same rin, if they need tae pass by the bit. Begin in the field, and work oot, and then ye've a chance. A rabbit 'll never pass whaur anither has been snared."

"I hear," said David, "that the Highland gamekeeper is away back to the hills."

"He is," said Adam, with satisfaction, remembering the part he had had in making the lowlands intolerable to the interloper. "He's awa back tae his 'braxie'; them that sits on ither folks' coat-tails never sit easy. Him and his Gàelic! There's naething has the Gaelic in the lowlands but the jucks. Speaking o' jucks! Heard ye o' the trick that the Hielan' gamekeeper played on Ochers o' the Dykes? It seems Ochers wis taen wi' a passion for a settin' o' pheasants' eggs, and the Heilanman said he wad sell him a dizzen, and ye'll no hinder him tae gie Ochers a dizzen o' jucks' eggs, and the puir

object didna' ken the differ atween the twa, so he pit his best chick-marly hen on them and invited his freens tae see them when they cam' oot. Noo aifter due time the wee jucks cracked the shells and cam' oot, and that nicht a wheen o' us wi' a licht gaed oot tae see them, and there wis as fine a clecking o' wee jucks as ever ye saw—and Struthers o' The Bloom said, 'They're braid in the neb for pheasants,' and Pyat o' Cowrie Doon says, 'They're curus i' the feet for pheasants—but mebbe that's Heilan'!' and I said, 'Yes! They're Heilan'-like pheasants,' and Ochers o' the Dykes, wi' a faith that wad move mountains said, 'They're braid nebbed and wab-fitted, *but the gem's in them!*' Man! I wis near bye wi' it a' thegither—and div' ye ken, I've often thocht o' the chick-marly hen wha' consenting tae sit on pheasants' eggs (like a country wife wet-nursing the laird's son), brocht oot a clecking o' barn-yard jucks." Scotch wit is proverbially sarcastic, justifying the axiom of the ancient, who said, "All laughter has its genesis in others' pain." David laughed heartily. But Adam was already on another tack.

"I fell in wi' Haggis Sandy the day," he said, "preaching tae the hale o' Yondertown, and as drunk's a Lord! Man! He's a wonderfu' example o' the pooer o' memory yon! I canna jist faddom him! There's gude in him—but it's maist awfu' weel hidden. Div' ye ken that he'll never gie a sermon o' The Minister's for luv nor money? They say ye nicht fill Sandy fuller than a black puddin' an' he wad never sae far forget himsel' as tae gie ae word o' The Minister's—and a packman tell 't me

a maist wonderfu' thing (if it's true), that ae time on his roonds he fell in wi' ane o' thae revivals that certain bodies haud i' the High Street o' Auld Reekie and sic like sinfu' places, and wha should rise tae his feet tae speak but Haggis Sandy, sober, and wi' a face as them that see veesions, and he gaed them a sermon o' The Minister's—on repentance and grace and mercy and the loving kindness and long suffering o' the Lord, and the packman tell 't me that he took his ways wi' a sair hert, for he had gone tae the meeting wi' the intention o' cryin' his wares and gathering the folk awa frae the preachin'."

David's heart warmed to the memory of the man whose brief but precious ministry had been so fruitful. His name was but a tradition of the countryside, for he was known definitely and uniquely as "The Minister"—his career was familiar to them all, for he had been the son of one of their familiar friends, his brilliant record in the University puffed up the parish which gave him birth, the troublous epoch of his studenthood did not deter him from attaining the highest honours (though the irreverent said that the finest boxer, runner and leaper in all Scotland had been spoiled in making The Minister), but when he came back to them at last, pale, grave-browed and kindly-eyed, and preached to them, as he alone could preach, of peace perfected and rest attained, then they worshipped him. In two years came the cholera—and there was no deathbed by which The Minister did not stand, no passing soul he did not strengthen, no aching heart upon which he did not bestow peace—then he went—slipping away quietly as a tired child creeps to bed.

To a college friend, appointed by will, was given the task of looking over his papers—but the most vital document was found beneath the pillow on which he died. A woman's letter, written on crested paper, and in the elegant Italian fashion affected by great ladies in those days. The letter was brief. It bade him choose between the writer and his ministry. She evidently loved him (in the selfish fashion of some women), but she feared the manner of her life with him, and proffered with assurance high positions to which his scholarly attainments fairly entitled him. Well—he had put it by. Though his friend, gazing upon the long perfumed tress of hair that uncoiled from the letter, and thinking of the uncouth parishioners for whom The Minister had given his life, sighed, and felt his friend was not as other men. Read even as they may be from his imperfect notes, his sermons stir the heart, a subtle thread of golden humanity moves the reader yet, and, however dead we may be to spiritual things, his smiting words sting us to a sense of the disloyalty of altogether forgetting the Faith of Scotland. Even the most thoughtless of the country folk rarely asked Haggis Sandy to repeat his sermons, but it was a well-known fact that miserable Susan Shirley, who lived in the Bothy at Bog-end, scraped and hoarded her infrequent pence till she gathered one-and-sixpence, and then sent for Haggis Sandy to repeat to her The Minister's sermon on "The woman at the well of Samaria." Many a time she listened to that sermon, poor besotted, bedraggled Susan, and each time she strove to grow decenter. Who shall say in vain? We are prone to deride those whose hold upon

the life-line slips, without thinking of how their sliding hands may be cut. All these things Adam Pather and David discussed ere Adam took his leave. David went with him to the door—the night was very calm. After his friend departed David stood a little looking up at the distant dome with its twinkling stars; he turned and went within, extinguished the light in the living-room, and went to his own room—the uncurtained window let in the filtered radiance of the night. Rising out of a shadowy corner a figure came towards him, and fell at his feet, where he stood.

"David," said Marriotte, "I have sinned—before Heaven, and against you."

The symbols of time are interchangeable, and in vital crises become meaningless—neither knew whether the succeeding silence endured for a second or an age.

When Arthur, "the goodliest King that Christendom e'er saw," found Guenevere at his feet, he let her grovel there whilst he harangued her upon his purity and her sin, and expatiated upon his moral philosophy—not so this Scotch peasant. The woman he loved—not "*had*" loved—was at his feet, a suppliant. His whole being was blasted by the revelation of her words; he realized all the depth of his fatuity, as before death, they say, one realizes the whole sum of his iniquity. But David's love had been reared upon no foundation of granted favours—it had drawn its sustenance and perfected itself as the air plant perfects its blossoms—from aliments too ethereal, too refined, for the gross eye

of flesh to perceive them. He put aside all thought of himself—remembering only that she sought the pardon that was his gift. Surely—surely she would strive for God's also?

He stooped and raised her gently, encircling her with his arm, and laying her spent head upon his breast. There was in his touch no hint of husbandhood, and its tenderness was not the tenderness of a lover. His authority was the authority of the priest who raises the fallen, his tenderness that of the physician who skillfully heals the hurt body. She lay still upon his breast, looking up at him in the wan starlight, a world of question in her eyes, a strange eerie sense of storm past in her heart; again she murmured, "I have sinned!"

"Sin no more," he said—in his eyes there was a strenuous prayer for her, and his words demanded a pledge—even as they implied god-like pardon. She met his gaze unfalteringly.

"I will not," she said—*nor did she.*

He kissed her on the brow, it was like the laying on of hands which welcomes the avowed penitent.

He turned with her towards the door—old Betty waited fearfully without—he put Marriotte into the arms which opened to receive her, and went out alone into the night.

CHAPTER XV.

“For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment.”

DAVID HAMILTON went blindly forth into the night as wounded creatures crawl to the thickest shade to die. He longed instinctively for shadow, but the wan radiance of the stars pursued and sought him out, revealing with persistent assiduity the petty details of the path, which so registered themselves upon his mind that ever after he could have told the routine of bush and boulder, whin and hawthorn, along the whole length of the way he went that night; the fact was that his mind, numbed by the shock of what he had just heard, had ceased to select, and was quite passive to the registration of useless details.

He held on his way steadily, with no conscious recognition of purpose, but an instinctive determination which took him swiftly forward.

For two hours Hamilton walked, lonely as those who traverse the valley of the Dark Shadow; then he saw large before him the great stone farmhouse where he was born, and behind it the clustered barns, byres, stables, and lint-mill, where he had often worked o' nights—he could hear the trickling of the mill-stream as it fell into the wheel-pit, and he saw by a curious flash of memory the tiny ferns grow-

ing out of the crevices of the rocks in the side of the pit, and the white foam that gradually grew to be green moss at the edge. He could hear a soft stir of cattle, and now and then the stamping of a horse. He crossed the courtyard; in the second storey was the room which had been his, he had been born in it, and had never occupied another room in the house even for a night. His father's rule had been strict, and the locking-up time of half-past ten had not accorded well with the exuberance of young blood, and vigour, which could dance all night and work all day without giving the matter a thought—how often, with gay emphasis, David, when asked for a song, had trolled forth:

“ Ma falther, the elder, like a’ godly men
Shuts up his hoose at hauf past ten—”

for David, as all his young companions knew, had made for himself a way in and out. A few stones picked from the substantial rubble wall gave foothold and hand-hold, and David, despite his size, had squirrel-like agility. He found the familiar corner of the house, rounded it, set his foot in the first niche, reached above him and caught the first hand-hold, and in a moment or two was sitting on the wide window-ledge, raising the window by the old familiar trick. As he stepped into the room he paused, wondering for the first time if any one might be in it—but all was silent with the stillness of empty air. He groped his way to the bed and flung himself down upon it. Here, where the battles of his hot youth had been fought out, here where the first dreams of manhood and love had come to him, blurred

to his vision by reason of their own brightness, here where he had brought his thoughts of the maid Marriotte to marshall them forth in the darkness as too sacred to be dwelt on by day; here, where he was wont to con over every sweet look and word of hers as a miser in a secret place reckons his gold; here where he had resolved to give up father and mother, sister and brother, and "count the world well lost" for her sake; here where he had builded the edifice of his hopes so high, he set himself to search the ruins for any remnant of life.

What bitter bread had been his portion since then! What draughts of eisel had mocked his thirst!

Slowly, tediously, painfully, he strove to search out palliation for Marriotte. Being a man, and mortal, the first clearly-defined thought which came to him was the memory of those dismal prophecies his friends had made, at which his love had mocked.

How often had he been told that "Women o' Marriotte's bluid never run the straight road"? How often had his father pointed out Marriotte's depraved mother with his whip, saying sententiously, "Like mither like dochter!"? How often had his own mother said oracularly, "What's bred in the bane comes oot in the flesh"? (How many aphorisms we have to indicate our lack of surprise at our neighbours' sin! How curious it is to think that sometimes, as in this case, our accusations may be transfigured into justification!)

These dismal prophecies had indeed "come true"—the man's very spirit bowed before the realization; but as he pondered over these things there came

to him a pitiful comprehension of their hidden significance—his mind, untrained in psychological speculation was plunged into the bewildering issues of "individual responsibility"—but by the subtlety of love, unaided by education, this poor Scotchman wrought out for himself an understanding of the theory of heredity, and it seemed to him interchangeable with his previous conception of Original Sin. He comprehended the terrible handicap under which Marriotte had started.

When Hamilton's thoughts turned to Bowman all calm fell from him. This man, her betrayer—and his—was yet alive. Yet even as the wrath in him flamed to thought of vengeance, there came to him thought of Marriotte, any blow aimed at Bowman must pierce her first. Hamilton's baited passions rose in rebellion against the yoke which righteousness laid upon them—but in vain. A light, so dim and faint that he dare hardly take it for a guide, was beginning to glimmer vaguely to David's vision. He looked back upon his own conduct towards Marriotte as compared with Bowman's, but the tow of self-sufficiency was shrivelled by a breath from fiery truth, and Hamilton told himself humbly that whilst he had resisted the impulsion of his own love he might not have resisted one loving smile from Marriotte. He realized that these two had fought each a two-fold fight, against themselves and each other.

Falteringly, step by step, David hewed out for himself a perilous stairway to surmount human prejudice. When he felt his footing secure upon the summit his weary spirit gave thanks indeed, but the

rarefied atmosphere of these heights, purged of all personal passion, could not long consort with human life. David lay formulating for himself a strange course of action for a betrayed husband—but we must not forget that the Master dipped his hand in the dish with him who was to betray Him.

There is no subject in the world about which such egotistical rubbish is prated as Honour. A husband's honour is held to be so paramount that he may slay its betrayer, and all men condone the deed. Does the death of the assailer assolize his soul? Or is there justification for giving this one sinner among so many sinners no moment to repent? It would seem that to cast a woman out to open shame is the only salve this parlous honour knows—What of the woman? Tennyson's King Arthur rants at Guenevere:

“ I hold that man the worst of public foes,
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house.”

This is very fine, for the husband, the children, and the family pride are all considered, but what about the woman? Does not the burden of her repentance weigh at all? There is no defiance in this, nor, so long as arrogant self sways men's hearts, will it ever obtain—yet David Hamilton's decision seems in no slight measure an echo of The Master's voice when he said, “Neither do I condemn thee.”

When Hamilton had hammered these things into shape upon the anvil of his soul, he turned his eyes inward upon his own pains and losses, and wept

in the dark of his natal chamber as bitterly as, when a child, he had stolen to it to have his hour of childish grief unseen, and as a big stream draws to itself and is made great by little streams, so these far-away griefs became tributary to the great one which was overwhelming him. Yet not in vain hope of comfort had he sought out the old room, for there, where his life had had its first beginnings, he heard faint presage of the end. It is perhaps no fable to dream that when all earthly comfort fails there comes a whisper from beyond our bourne bidding us be of good cheer. However this may be, David rose from his long agony strengthened for the hard road before him, for by a sure and certain prescience he knew it would not be a long one.

He let himself out as he had entered. How kindly the old familiar influences had dealt with him! When he stood fairly without the gates again he looked back as one who takes a long farewell indeed, and leaving a blessing, more potent perhaps because given from a hand emptied of blessings, upon the old roof-tree, and those who slumbered beneath it, he turned and faced the future.

He had a stiff two hours' walk between him and Farden Ha', but to his physical hardihood, that was nothing. Ere he reached Trailfit he was to experience one of those strange coincidences which sometimes make us pause, startled, upon the life road. Upon these things how many alluring theories have been built up, and indeed might we not be tempted to believe in the tender childish story which tells us that a good birth-angel bides beside us always, yearning over our errant footsteps, and striving by

warnings and silent signs to guide us aright? The flying dawn beat

“ Her wings of dewy light
Full in the faltering face of night,”

a shimmering radiance of gossamers was on the grass, nets of pearl, starred with diamonds, hung about each daisy—no smokes rose yet from the farmhouses, for it was Sunday morning, and the hard-working households had an hour or two of extra sleep—but the birds were singing as only Scotch birds can sing at dawn. David took a slanting cut across the fields, and as he passed close by the Bothy of Bog-end farm, where poor Susan Shirley lived, he heard voices. Wishing to pass unseen, he was about to make a *détour*, when he caught the accents of Haggis Sandy calmed to a tone of reverence.

“ Let us solemnize our minds to worship God.”

David Hamilton bared his head, and fell upon his knees, behind a whin bush, knowing that Haggis Sandy was about to repeat to Susan Shirley the Minister's sermon on “ The woman at the well of Samaria.”

That sermon was never forgotten by any one who heard it. Its pathos, its eloquence, its almost divinely spiritual insight into the mercy of Christ, its appeal from the typically blind justice of man to the omniscient loving-kindness of the Elder Brother, the plea to the sinner, the help, the gracious promise—these things rendered it unforgettable. Heard by David Hamilton at such a moment, under such circumstances, it is little wonder that he felt, with reverent wondering egotism, that a sign had been given

him, a sign that he had chosen the better part—he felt with humble gratitude that he had been given “reasons for the faith which was in him.” The words of the last prayer died away—a broken “Amen” sounded from the Bothy, and one went up—a vow from the heart of the unseen listener. David rose and departed as from a sanctuary. As he passed he caught a fleeting glimpse of the Bothy, with Haggis Sandy at the door (to him presently came Susan Shirley, and counted some pennies into his palm).

A little further on David met the herd boy on his way to the hills—the hour Susan had chosen for her sermon hearing had been none too early to be undisturbed. Something of awe and mystery, the result of this late experience, clung to David, as he entered the portal where he had met his betrayer first, upon which the two had experienced that inexplicable chill, above which that blood-like blotch upon the stone hung ominously.

Little Davy was in the kitchen, looking peaked and delicate—he had held an all-night vigil by David’s empty bed. David clapped his shoulder, and met his mute pitiful gaze with a smile; he spoke to Lizzie Lindsey, and when Marriotte entered, somewhat feebly, he greeted her very gently—and thus David Hamilton took up the life which had indeed become for him “a solemn scorn of ills.”

Far away from the sordid Scotch mining village, in one of the loveliest valleys in Sussex, the congregation of a little church was gathering in response to the summons of a peal of chimes—again and again the bells clashed out, carriage after carriage drove up

from the country houses; within the church there was the faint rustle of silks and the swish of satins, at the porch there were murmured greetings, and over all the scene a sense of righteous well-being, an air of comfortable well-doing—how different, Bowman thought as he entered with his cousin and uncle, from the austere humbleness and grave solemnity of the church in Trailfit. This English church had been lately built, its stones were still unstained by time, and guiltless of ivy. Within, it was very sweet and ornate, the light dimmed and enriched by the stained glass of the windows, and all things fitly furnished forth; upon the altar were two bouquets of white flowers, Bowman had helped to gather them in the conservatories the night before. The congregation arrived with provincial punctuality—the bells rang on, but there was a hint of finality in their music. They ceased, suddenly it seemed, and immediately the organ's voice began to thrill through the church in a succession of minor modulations, till at an imperative note the choristers, white-robed, grave-faced, came forth and the service began.

To Bowman, it brought a strange sense, half pain, half pleasure, such as one feels in revisiting familiar scenes in which he has no longer any part. He was following the service perfunctorily, his mind away in the North—when, during the reading of the lesson, his eyes fell upon the light at the reading desk, rendered necessary upon the brightest days by the sombre richness of the windows. It was a candle set in a bell-shaped glass. By some chance its flame was divided into two parts, one of which burned steadily with a pale pure light, whilst the flame of

the other coiled and twisted about it, a tremulous spiral of yellowish dusky light, and, as Bowman watched, the symbolism of the two flames struck home to his heart. He remembered his boyhood, his young manhood with its dreams and ideals, the love which had come to him as a dream of the truth made perfect—"the substance of things hoped for"—and how he had fallen from the high estate of his convictions. Surely, in these flames was the perfect typification of his life. He recalled certain words and fitted them to the music of the organ.

" Our little lives are kept in equipoise
By opposite attractions and desires,
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
And the more noble instinct that aspires."

Alas! He had not even maintained the ignoble balance! He watched the two contending flames till his eyes ached. It seemed to his forlorn fancy that the white flame grew momentarily less steady, grew little by little more thread-like. The dusky flame writhed about it like a greedy serpent. And presently it imparted an impulse of movement to the purer flame, and then the two flickered and flamed together as if in deadly combat. "So it has been," he said in his heart, as he bowed his head with the others. Mechanically he murmured the petitions of the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," the sibilant syllables hissed throughout the church from the altar to the darkest corner, and it seemed to Bowman all the dormant snakes coiled in his heart raised their heads and stung and hissed aloud the story of his shame.

Far away, a woman whose feet were drawing very near the portal of deadly pain, endured a like agony of mind.

The thread which bound these two lives together was, indeed, a scarlet one, but it was divinely strong, indivisible by distance or separation. The shame had soaked it, it had been strained hard upon the rack of circumstances, and the acid of self-condemnation had fallen upon it in vitriolic drops, but its fibres were unfrayed, its knot unloosened, within its tether it held tangled two strong souls.

Might it be that after the bodies of these souls have fallen into disremembrance, the souls and the tie which united them shall yet endure?

The petitions over, Bowman raised his eyes—and Lo! A miracle! For, pure, white, steady and undisturbed, having taken to itself the volume of the other flame and purified it, the white light burned triumphantly alone, and by its light the curate was reading: “All we like sheep have gone astray.” . . .

A brief peace let fall its mantle upon Bowman's spirit—and in a gaunt chamber in a fantastic old house in Scotland, slumber blotted out for a space the vision of judgment from before the eyes of Marriotte Hamilton.

For two weeks Bowman waited in “such despair as mocks itself with smiles,” but no word came save the carefully wrought out reports of his foreman, which kept him in touch with each day's work in the pits. He observed the routine of life in his uncle's house with the strange feeling of one who in retracing his footsteps finds that he can never, by any effort, put

each foot down in the old print. He observed with a kind of bitter self-mockery, that insensibly, during his absence, he had become a much more important member of the family than he was wont to be. The general will of the household seemed to be animated by his will, and to gravitate to the ends he desired. Strangely enough, he was little irked by his engagement to his cousin. His conscience, though grown scrupulous and over eager, yet failed to sting him there, for he realized, most perfectly, that Edith's emotions were too well ordered to be storm-tost in any event. He felt that any pain Edith might feel over his defection would be entirely obliterated by her serene sense of his great loss in losing her. He understood this without scoff at his cousin, she was there as birth and up-bringing had made her, a pale, perfumeless, hothouse blossom, growing serenely where she had been planted, nor seeing any farther than the walls of the hothouse which sheltered her.

One night—two weeks and a day—since he had watched the contending flames in the church, Bowman found himself at the close of a long day, eager to be alone. But certain invariable customs were to be observed before he could go to his room and dream of the dark-eyed woman he loved. Loved! How he loved her! he thought, with a swift intaken breath, to thus crucify his pride at her bidding—for the sin by which the angels fell had much part in this man.

He had a final glass of whiskey and soda, a final cigar with his uncle, then he rose to bid Edith good-night. She accompanied him to the hall, and stood beside him whilst he took his candle from the table and lighted it.

"Good-night," she said, holding out her hand.

"Good-night," he answered. There was a moment's pause, a hint of suppressed expectancy flickered into her face, he bent over and kissed her; "Good-night," he repeated, finding no lover-like phrase ready. She smiled at him and he left her. At the turn of the stairs he looked back, and met her eyes; she stood where the yellow radiance of the light shone round her face like a nimbus—a fresh, sweet, English face; but it seemed to Bowman there was nothing more in it than the lamp-light revealed, nothing more subtle than a decent alternation of pink and white, nothing more vivid than a saving sense of its owner's dignity. He smiled kindly into the uplifted eyes, and passed out of their reach. As he blew out his candle and turned up the gas, a sense of the luxury and comfort of the room came to him, to be dispossessed the next instant by a keen nostalgia for a far different chamber, one bare of ornament, devoid of luxury, scant even of comfort, and yet—inexpressibly dear—one with bare barren walls, dusky corners, and a huge antiquated bed, hung with quaintly brodered curtains; one where the broad window ledges held pots or nosegays of homely garden flowers; one, where the silence was sometimes stirred by the passage of a woman's feet, by the sound of a voice—the memoried accents of which thrilled through his soul and exorcised all evil.

He tried to sleep, but a sense of vague and dreadful apprehension grew upon him. As the minutes lengthened, it intensified, till it became intolerable anguish, and then there fell upon him a horrible phantasmagoria of suffering. Suffering, the possibility

of which he had never comprehended, woven of all the pangs a human creature can know; a strange medley of pain, combined with a terrible sense of guilt, and an overwhelming recognition of responsibility. . . . Time became eternized, life only a sense of anguish, thought a chaos. Then the Secret of this terrible night was made plain to him, its terrors were given a voice, which spoke to the innermost *ego* of this man's soul; for, cleaving the chaos, as lightning cleaves through the angry clouds only to reveal their horror, there came a sound—a cry—such a cry as he had never heard before, but which some hitherto dormant faculty recognized with fear and trembling—the first cry of a child, and *he knew*, and all the fantastic rags of self-justification and sophistry fell from him, and left him to face the truth, naked, but not unashamed. . . .

He wept long in the darkness, till at last the first pallid threads of light began to weave themselves into dawn.

Far away beneath the menace of a tottering tower, a tired light glimmered faintly, as the dawning day came in. And a woman worn with pain slept beside her child. Upon her face there rested, even in sleep, the imprint of ineffaceable despair. The calm crown of triumphant womanhood was not for her. Stripped of dreams, hopes, and aspirations, the face which masks a human soul is very piteous—and it was thus hers, showed in the cleft of the pillow—the “final pang of knowledge” was ended, there was no longer any veil between the soul of Marriotte Hamilton and the night.

CHAPTER XVI..

“ Love, that the whole world’s waters shall not drown,
The whole world’s fiery forces not burn down ;
Love, that what time his own hands guard his head,
The whole world’s wrath and strength shall not strike dead.”

AFTER that night of revelation, Bowman waited breathlessly for Marriotte’s summons to return. For the first few days each sound of foot-step or bell in the great house made him start nervously, and he was not satisfied till he heard definitely what was the occasion of it. Edith wondered at this.

“ I am expecting news from Scotland,” he said briefly—too worn and harassed to care much whether his secret was guessed at or not.

Terrible thoughts of terrible possibilities assailed him, and he woke every few moments at night from dreams of being summoned by Old Betty for that farewell which she had said would not be grudged ; but as the days passed this fear died, and in its place grew an ineffable eagerness to see Marriotte. Thus he waited in an anxiety which consumed him like a fever. He had no idea in what situation he would find Marriotte. If David had repudiated her upon the instant he knew she would find shelter with Old Betty, or it might be David would have left her in possession of Farden Ha’ and gone back to his own

people—but the latter suggestion was untenable, for in that event he would have heard of David leaving the pits through his foreman's reports. Bowman never even imagined that matters might be as they were—and, indeed, taking it for granted that Marriotte and David would be separated, he found his own course easier, or at least simplified. He never forgot for an instant that he had his reckoning with David to pay, and he had always shuddered to think of any scene of violence before Marriotte. Deep down too at the bottom of his heart there flickered a faint hope that David would free himself by law—then—*then!*—But he did not dare dwell upon this, for a certain prescience warned him that David's course was likely to be different from that of other men. Sometimes Bowman had a vision of Marriotte's malignant mother—and to his fancy, grown sick through over-much perplexity, it seemed that she was quite likely to come and add to Marriotte's misery by her presence. Again another thought surprised him one day—the thought of the villagers. How would he bear their detestation in place of their prideful friendliness? Doubtless ere this his name must be a hissing among them, and Bowman realized that he loved these grimy-faced people as a good general loves his roughest soldiers—over and against everything there was the thought of again seeing Marriotte.

He closed his eyes—recalled the accents of her voice saying his name, and a tremour such as vivifies the needle near the magnet thrilled through him. Thus he waited, and two weeks had gone by, ere, suddenly, as the Celestial light shone round Paul of Tarsus, there came to Bowman, walking in the

garden with his cousin, a realization of the truth. Marriotte meant never to recall him. That farewell had been meant as final. She had bound him by a promise to get him out of harm's way—in woman-fashion she was trusting to that promise to keep him in safety—whilst she remained in David's hand a hostage for their sin. This was the reason of her urgency. This why Old Betty had said so meaningly, "Bide till she sends for you."

His poor, pretty, brave Marriotte had by a wile made him play the coward whilst he had thought her idea of his banishment was an obsession which her state made sacred!

That night Harald Bowman left for Scotland, and in the early afternoon of next day he reached Trailfit.

The first person he saw was David, and a bitter thought came to Bowman that the outraged husband meant to kill him ere he saw Marriotte. The intolerable thought gave birth to an ugly determination. He would fight for one look of her as man never fought before, after that David could have his life as a gift if nothing else would content him. His lips tightened to a livid line, his eyes were full of sombre defiant fire, his cheeks were leaden as David drew near. As he approached, Bowman wondered at his face. It had aged and altered unbelievably during the month of Bowman's absence. Upon it there was no fury, no tempest; his lips were circled by lines which hinted at hardly maintained control, and in his eyes was mingled reproach, and question—with an infinitude of compassion and forgiveness.

Bowman stopped, struck dumb. David halted, and for a space the two men looked at each other eye to

eye—soul to soul. Slowly but surely the steady eyes of David Hamilton pierced through all the guards of pride and egotism and defiance built about the citadel of shame in Bowman's heart, and at length Bowman's eyes faltered and fell—a sound as of the rushing of many waters was in his ears, and he knew that he stood before one who was greater than himself.

"I have been to meet the English train for some days past," said David, speaking in a voice pregnant with repressed emotion. "I wanted to tell you there's a daughter in Farden Ha'." Bowman's heart stood still.

"And—and?" he gasped, his face working.

"Marriotte's well," said David steadily, "but very weakly"—he said no more, and again silence fell between them. Bowman, abased to the dust, suddenly cried out, his voice jangling and uncontrolled:

"David! May I go to Farden Ha'?"

"Surely," answered Hamilton. "Your room's waiting you," then with one more look—a look which smote Bowman like a blow on the lips, he turned and went back to the pit-head, and his engine, and all that afternoon the throbs of the panting steam made *obligato* to the murmur of a prayer.

Bowman took his way through the village, walking as one in sleep. What manner of greeting was this David had given him? What subtlety of invention was this which disguised vengeance in such fashion? Did any horror await him at Farden Ha'? The women stood at the doors as he passed, and returned his unconsciously tentative salutation delightedly. They were evidently glad to see him back, and upon

no face was there any condemnation. Deep perplexity fell upon him.

"The manager's a hantle mair like a ghaist nor himsel'," said Mrs. Jamphraes.

"He'll hae been missing his parritch," said Bell Telpher.

"Or sitting up ower late at the coortin'," suggested Mrs. Troon.

"They say she's a graund beauty," said Barbara Pillans. She had heard nothing to that effect, but it seemed so reasonable a supposition to her that she had no sense of mendacity in suggesting she had.

"Far-awa burds hae feathers fine," said Mrs. Jamphraes contemptuously.

"If Miss Casseles wis tae come back frae thae frog-eatin' foreign kintries tae Cassels Hoose, we'd sune see whether the manager wad mairry in England. He's no lived sae lang in Scotland withoot kenning there's nae leddy like a Scotch leddy, a rale leddy I mean, no ane o' the hauflin' sort like yon yella-faced Lanishaw madam."

The women looked at Mrs. Jamphraes with admiration.

The manager and Miss Casseles! Here was match-making at an altitude which staggered them.

"'Odds!" said Mrs. Troon. "That wad be graund!"

"The hale o' Trailfit wis aince pairt o' the Casseles Estate," said Mrs. Telpher, "but there wis lawin' ower it, and they were pairted."

"Heard ye ony word o' her coming hame?" asked Barbara Pillans anxiously.

"Na," said Mrs. Jamphraes discontentedly. "What pleasure the gentry take in stravagin' up and doon the earth when their ain hoose is standin' waitin' for them passes ma comprehension! But!" she said shaking her head oracularly, "If she comes back, mark ma words, there'll be a match o't, and if she disna," she added with confidence, "then she disna ken what she's missin'."

Meantime, Bowman had reached the threshold of Farden Ha', and paused, trembling in every limb; the door was open, he went in softly and as softly through the passage to the kitchen; there, bending over the fire was Old Betty. She had in her hand a cornucopia-shaped tin pan with a long handle, known to the sick nurses of Trailfit as a "pingle-pan." Betty did not see Bowman, but proceeded to fill the pan with stout, then she thrust the pointed end deep in the coals. She straightened herself stiffly and gave a look about, seeing Bowman.

"Gude guide us!" she cried. "Hoo cam' ye here?"

"Where is she?" he said; "where is she?"

The old woman looked at him, a strange change came over her face, a sort of veil dimmed her eyes like the film that shades the eagle's from the sun. She spoke in an inflectionless voice which yet rang weirdly in his ears.

"Ye have come back," she said, uttering the words slowly as one reading from symbols difficult to decipher. "Ye have come back! And as ye brocht sin wi' ye afore, ye bring Death noo! For I see Death for this hoose and them that dwell therein! But ye'll hae mony a sair hert between noo and then, baith you and Marriotte—but at the hinder end

ye're thegither, you and her and the wean—and—" there came a long pause, the old woman's face was ashy. Bowman made a step towards her, thinking she was going to fall—then her voice sounded again hoarse and terror-stricken—

"And David!" she sank into a chair, flung her apron over her head and rocked back and forth.

"Oh wae's me! Wae's me! Shurely there's no' gaun tae be murder din on ye a' by that puir lad David, that ye've dishonoured? Oh, Sin! Sin! and the wages o' sin!!"

The liquid in the pan began to bubble and hiss. Old Betty put down her apron, and rising, took it from the fire. She turned to Bowman.

"It wis the second sicht that cam' ower me," she said solemnly, "and there's nae questionin' the truth o't. See that ye say nae word tae ony leevin' saul, for when judgment's revealed it's revealed tae them wha's tae ken and its no' for us tae tak it upon oorsels tae gossip o' the Lord's intentions. Marriotte's in the keeping-room. Gang till her. I'm thinkin' a word or a look here or there 'll mak' little difference noo! She's wanted ye sairly. I'll see ye're no' disturbit."

Betty put down the pan and sank into a chair—terrified at the vision she had had, and cowering before the certainty of its fulfilment.

Bowman went through the passage, his heart stilled by a great joy, which neither present perplexity nor presage of future disaster could disturb.

He entered the room and closed the door softly.

Marriotte sat in a low chair, leaning back wearily. Upon her knees lay her child. As his first footfall

sounded in the room, she rose unsteadily to her feet with a little cry—the next instant his arms were about her, and the child rested upon their breasts as in a cradle.

What she murmured to him then, and what he found to say to her is not for us to know.

She cried a little upon his shoulder where she leaned, for she was weak and spent, and the retrospect of the past terrible weeks abode with her like an evil dream, from which, though she knew she dreamed, she could not break away. She swayed and he cried out at his carelessness and put her back into her chair and knelt before her, calling her tender names.

Presently the child stirred, and Marriotte with gentle awkwardness folded back the little white shawl of Shetland wool and showed him the child's little face and tiny black poll, and pointed out upon the baby brow a mark like a tiny triangle with a red spot like blood at the apex.

"Do you remember?" Marriotte whispered, "the night you were hurt—and the bruise?"—the curious little mark registered upon the child's brow seemed, somehow, to bring home to Bowman the reality and continuity of this experience. He put forth his hand and touched the tiny crinkled palm of the child, and its little fingers closed round his finger—an indescribable thrill shot through him as he felt the puny clasp. This was of a truth his child. Within this frail case was the spirit his passion had clothed with flesh—he looked at Marriotte, his finger still in the baby's grasp, her eyes suffused with shy acknowledgment met his. Despite everything, a joy in their dual parenthood gushed up in their hearts.

"Harald," she whispered, "isn't she bonnie?"

"She's an angel, like her mother," he said.

Presently, with some little stir, Old Betty entered, took the baby and departed, saying it was time for Marriotte to be in bed again, and that she would be back in a few minutes.

Then Marriotte hurriedly told Bowman of her confession and of David.

"I promised repentance for myself," she said, "for I thought you would never come back."

"You thought that!" he cried—there was reproach, even indignation in his voice.

"I saw no other way," she said, her face blanching. Then terror fell upon her. "You must go before David—before David——"

"I have seen David," he said; "he told me to come here—that my room was waiting."

Marriotte gave a cry.

"He means you to be here—that we may see each other every day—that we may repent—as we sinned—together—that——"

Bowman gave a groan.

"He is not as you and me," he said, "he does not know."

"He knows all—all——" said Marriotte, "and he has put by the thought of punishment that we may have a chance to—to——" She never completed the sentence, for she fell forward in a faint out of her chair.

He took her in his arms and carried her up the stairs and along the corridor to her own room, and there he found Old Betty. He entered the room palsied with fear, but Old Betty reassured him.

"She'll dae, she'll dae," said the old woman, "but she's sair worn wi' want o' sleep and—there's wine in that bottle, gie me some in that gless"; he obeyed with the anxiety and promptitude of a child. Betty moistened Marriotte's lips, and presently she stirred, the old woman looked at Bowman and he left the room.

That night Bowman and Hamilton supped together alone, as they had done upon the night when Bowman first entered Trailfit. The thought of that first repast was present in the mind of each. There was little said. Once there came, quavering faintly through the devious passages to their ears, the cry of the child. Both men grew white as death, though neither looked at the other.

"Shut the door, Lizzie," said David, quietly, though his voice was tremulous.

That night Bowman went again to that chamber whence he had looked to see Marriotte walking mid the mists. The ways of his life seemed sadly confused, and their ordering taken out of his hand. He felt the threads of his life were drawn tense as if from a shuttle nearly spent. The light of Spirituality was denied him, he could only read life's meanings by the light of his puny human aspirations or the more lurid illumination from his desires—and read thus the scroll of the future was undecipherable.

The days passed. Little by little Marriotte grew stronger, and the baby became an accepted factor in the daily life of those at Farden Ha'. Old Betty went back to her farm and her cows and her daily drives

to and from Trailfit. As she passed between the twilight fields, she mused much over those moments when the veil of the future had been withdrawn a moment—the fear of it laid hold upon her, and day by day she drew nigh Farden Ha' with trembling and departed with thankfulness. In due time the child was christened Marriotte Hamilton.

Day by day Marriotte sat at her tambour frame, the child's cradle within touch of her foot. The two men who sought her face with the keen analysis of love, saw strange lights and shadows in her eyes—as if, having gazed upon horizons far beyond their ken she had retained some shred of their mystery, some shadow of their secrets. This look—which seemed one of infinite and inexpressible knowledge—replaced the look of perplexed and wondering innocence to which Bowman's heart had so swiftly capitulated.

Pursuant upon new plans perfected whilst he was in England, Bowman was making great extensions in the mines. A new shaft was sunk, new galleries were projected, and in the parent mine, old ways were reopened—ways which a misty tradition said had been abandoned because of fire damp. The output was nearly doubled, and the exhilaration of prosperity was in the Trailfit atmosphere. One rich vein leading directly under Farden Ha' had been opened. It was from that side that the memorable explosion had come, but with the stringent regulations, which Bowman never relaxed, all went well.

Bowman worked night and day over his plans for the mines, but he never dared plan for himself, for he knew that he, Marriotte, and their child, rested in

the hollow of Hamilton's hand—and he did not know when it might close upon them.

Moreover, his punishment had begun. It is curious how often our punishments are adjusted to fit the measure of our iniquities—the analogy between sin and suffering is subtly close.

Bowman was torn by the talons of his own passions, upon which the nun-like austerity of Marriotte's attitude acted as whip and spur. In evil moments he cried out upon the clemency which gave him over to such daily torture, he was one of those insubmissive spirits which ever "kick against the pricks," and in these days the world went hard with him.

It was the Saturday before the July Sacrament when David came to Marriotte, walking in the garden as of old. In his hand he had two small square leaden "tokens," which in those days were given to each who aspired to approach the Lord's table; upon one side were the emblems of the bread and the wine, and upon the other the initials of the parish church.

"To-morrow is the Sacrament," said David, looking at Marriotte keenly.

"Yes," she said returning his look unflinching. He opened his hand where the two tokens lay. She put forth her hand and took one gravely.

"I will not partake unworthily," she said.

"Marriotte, Marriotte, see and be sure," said David agitatedly. The woman realized that his perfect trust in her and in her word was gone—a great pang rent her.

"I am sure, David," she said, and looked at him

from eyes whence tears at eve and dawn could not wash away the fires of inborn passion.

He looked at her again with a regard she felt too intolerable to be borne.

"David," she cried, her old rebellious spirit flashing out, "I have confessed my sin to God and to you! Do you want me to go before the Session? Do you want me to stand up in the Kirk and be disciplined? I have repented—not without struggle. What more do you want? Have you held your hand only to strike now? Have you?" she was speaking wildly—the suppressed nervousness and excitation of the past weeks hurrying her forward to reckless speech.

"Marriotte," he said—and laid a quiet hand upon her shoulder—she came to herself and looked up at him.

"Ma puir bairn," he said deeply moved. "Do you think that I—the man who loves you best in all the world" (he said the words solemnly and deliberately) "would bring you to shame in men's eyes? I would but mind you of one thing—that the Lord's body and blood is a promise for the future as well as the past"—he paused, his voice strangely choked—then human passion, and sorrow, and a rare gush of self pity overcame him.

"That I should need to say this to you," he cried. "To you—the bonniest and best——"

"David—David, don't!" she entreated in an agony of humbleness. "Don't! I am the worst of women; give me the token, only, David"—her voice was muffled by shame—"Trust me, or I dare not trust myself!" Afterwards they both remembered the day and the scene when David had used these very words

to her, "Trust me, lassie, or I dare not trust myself!" and a great bitterness of heart fell upon each as they thought of the change of rôles.

Other eyes had watched Marriotte and David as they talked in the garden. Bowman looking forth from his window had seen their agitated faces, their gestures, a wild thought came to him—the devil, watching his opportunity to drive this man forth from the refuge of penitential austerity, seized the evil moment; Bowman had suffered all the pangs love can know, save jealousy—its madness now violated the love which had been perfect. But for a moment the evil dream continued—then it faded, banished for ever. Bowman sank back from the window, a cold sweat bursting upon him as he thought of the abyss he had escaped—he trembled, as with an ague—rising, he went to the little latticed cupboard in the corner, where he kept his stand of spirits—he poured out for himself a great glass of whiskey—its warmth stole but slowly through his numbed veins, he took another and another—absently—a subtle and cumulative fever grew upon him.

That night, when deep sleep weighed down the eyelids of men, a voice spoke softly without Marriotte's door, a voice which thrilled through the innermost courts of her being. A voice at whose bidding she had wandered forth from innocence and followed the devices of her own heart—nor was its sorcery less potent than it was wont to be. She reached out to the stand beside her bed and caught up the little leaden token, and pressing it tightly upon her lips, as if forcibly to repress the welcoming words which had rushed up hot from the depths of her heart, answered

not again. Yet, her heart leaped so madly that it seemed to disturb the child resting upon it, so that it broke into a wail, which, when the one without heard he fled, and Marriotte Hamilton, soothing her child's cries, strove to soothe also her own troubled restless heart.

The morning found her uncomforted but triumphant.

In due time David and Marriotte paced forth together to the church, where, from his high seat apart, Bowman watched whilst in the reverent Scotch fashion the bread was broken and the wine blessed. The service was very long. At its conclusion Bowman did not return to Farden Ha', but walking far across the hills till he came to a little village, stayed there that night, returning to Trailfit by train next day, and when he entered Farden Ha' and saw Marriotte, her gentle eyes granted the forgiveness which his, shame-stricken, mutely asked.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT this time the village of Trailfit was convulsed through all its coteries by a most extraordinary event, which was nothing more nor less than the purchase of a piano by Bell Telpher, next door neighbour to Mrs. Jamphraes, and wife of Telpher, the foreman of the night shift in the Wester mine.

For some years Mrs. Jamphraes had had her suspicions of Mrs. Telpher—not that her most extravagant surmises had ever soared to a piano, but she had

had thoughts of a "real" mahogany dresser, a dinner service of china, a gold watch and chain, or even a fur coat, such as was the wonder of the parish when it appeared at church with Miss Casseles. It had been apparent to Mrs. Jamphraes for many years that Bell Telpher was most uncommonly economical, so much so that she did not even buy the half-pound of fresh butter for the Sabbath from Old Betty (as did every other miner's wife in the Rows), but contented herself, and perforce her man, with "the best saut." Moreover, she practised even more subtle modes of thrift. She being very big and her husband very small, and the regulation difference in the price of men's boots and women's being two-and-six, she went always to "Snod-fit," the shoe-maker, to be measured and fitted for shoes for her husband. This was a great enragement to "Snod-fit," who, knowing he was being "done," could not adduce any argument against it.

Bell Telpher had been a Muir, and the Muirs were all what the village called "maist oncommon determined." It was Mrs. Telpher's eldest sister, married to the Miller of Drumlie Burn, who, knowing herself to be dying of an incurable disease, sat up in bed and sewed "murnings" for her six children, carefully turning in the little skirts at the top, and showing her eldest daughter, aged eleven, how to lengthen them when the little ones outgrew them.

Many a time Mrs. Jamphraes had taken the village into her confidence respecting her opinion of Mrs. Telpher's excessive thrift.

"Caa' it here, caa' it there, it's naething but sneck-drawing, and sneck-drawing wi' an objeck!

Dinna think bit what Bell Telpher has some pridefu' notion in her heid! We a' ken hoo Janet, the miller's wife, sewed murnings for her weans when she wis lyin' wi' the seekness that feenished her, so that the first Sunday aifter the death they were a' in the kirk reeked oot in their blacks complete, a thing that hisna been kenned afore nor since her day; and I've often thocht o' the waefu' pride the deein' cratur must hae had in her when she thocht o' their appearance on the first Sawbath day in their blacks! They say she tell 't Mysie wi' maist her deein' breath tae see that a' the shoes were blacked, and wi' her ain hauns (and them as cauld for Death as parten's taes) she pit pocket-nipkins in the bit coats o' the callants, wi' the corners stickin' oot maist fashionable! I ken ma ain ken about the Muirs! Dinna haver tae me about Bell Telpher's economy. There'll be some un-kenned graundeur in that hoose or a's din."

Now before her marriage, Bell Telpher had been servant lass in the great farmhouse of Hunger-me-oot, and the memory of its grandeur was as a vision to her, and greatest of all its grandeurs in Bell's eyes was the piano, out of which, by some strange necromancy, there issued a musical noise which shaped itself to airs Bell knew.

Now when Bell's children died, and the big wages began, and her little husband became foreman, Bell conceived the fantastic idea of buying a piano. There were, as was customary in the Rows, two stationary beds, one on each side of "the room" in Bell's house. One of these was always appropriated to the heads of the household, the other was usually packed with children; in Bell's house

it was empty. She asked the manager of the Rows to have it removed, and he, being a family man, and thinking the empty nest vexed her bereaved eyes, consented. In its place Bell bestowed her piano.

When the lorry bringing it passed through the Rows, the houses literally gave up every soul within them (it was said bedridden Mary Troon had never realized her affliction till she missed the sight of the piano *en route*). The piano arrived at its destination at the head of a veritable procession, and, spread by eager forerunners, the news of its approach reached Mrs. Jamphraes ere the lorry turned out of The West. To the admiration of her neighbours, Mrs. Jamphraes went within, closed her doors, drew down her window blinds, and made no sign that she knew anything unusual was going on. What Mrs. Jamphraes suffered from this suppression of natural instincts will never be known, but, however great her sufferings were, they were probably mitigated by the elevation her self-control in the matter gave her over her neighbours. By what adaptation of the text, *apropos* of being "our brother's keeper," Mrs. Jamphraes convinced herself that the duty of chastening Bell's ungodly pride devolved upon her, it is impossible to say, but certain it is she took that burden upon her, and bore it with characteristic energy. The sound of Mrs. Telpher's piano seemed to have much the same effect upon Mrs. Jamphraes as the liturgy had upon Jennie Geddes, of blessed memory, and her mode of signifying her displeasure was equally vigorous. In every miner's house the coals were kept under one of the two beds, and whenever the random notes of Bell's piano tinkled forth, Mrs. Jam-

phraes fell to and shifted the coals—from beneath one bed to the other, a proceeding which completely drowned the piano. There were various opinions as to the propriety of this proceeding, but there was no dubiety as to Tam's view of the matter, for it came to pass that most of his Saturdays were spent in carrying coals across the kitchen floor, until he hit upon the plan of simply filling the pail and emptying it again where he stood. This plan, however, was but barely approved by his mother, who seemed to think the transfer of the coal from one bunker to another was a guarantee of good faith, divesting the proceedings of any appearance of malice. It must be recorded that Bell made the pace pretty hot for Mrs. Jamphraes, but Mrs. Jamphraes was not the woman to grudge a sore back in a good cause. True, the itinerary of the coals did not conduce to the cleanliness of the Jamphraes mansion, but, as Mrs. Jamphraes said heartily herself, she "wisna ane that wore the woo' aff her blankets wi' washin', nor wis she for ever quarrelling wi' her meat aboot a grain mair or less o' clean coal dust."

The gravest verbal reproach Mrs. Jamphraes now bestowed upon her children (and it behoved them then to be wary, for the hour of the fire-hardened strap was at hand), was:

"Sirs! But ye're comin' on fine! Ye'll sune be gentry! Ye'll be wantin' a piawny next" (this in a tone of exuberant sarcasm)—then changing to a fiercely-threatening tone:

"Awa' wi' ye! I'll *piawny* ye if I come tae ye!"

Meanwhile those at Farden Ha' held on their appointed way, and if either of them shrank from the flints and shards which strewed it, they gave no sign.

A great change had come over little Davy, he was growing fast, but, as the village said, he "wisna takkin' his breadth wi' him," in other words, he was shooting up into a tall slender stripling. A deep dissatisfaction had fallen upon him, a dissatisfaction with his own music. Like every soul about to soar he was conscious of the weakness of his wings. Over and over again he played the music he had heard the Londoner play upon his violin. One day he asked Hamilton if he knew the name of the London musician. Hamilton told him, and he cherished it in his heart. Again, Hamilton finding little Davy regarding him wistfully, said to him cheerily:

"Speak up, Davy! What is it?"

"I wis wondering," said little Davy, "if the London man wad teach me to play the fiddle if I wis tae gang till him some day?"

"Teach you to play the fiddle!" said Hamilton, in sheer astonishment; "ye're a far finer player than the best o' them!"

But Davy shook his head; as his mind slowly developed he realized that his music had limitations, whilst he was convinced that the possibilities of the violin were illimitable.

"No," he said; "I just play haphazard. There's things tae be din wi' the fiddle that I dinna ken"—then he lapsed into a dream of unrealized music.

It was not long after this, when Bowman, striving to keep the conversation at the table from falling

to pieces utterly, began to speak of his friend the musician. He was about to pull himself up, remembering little Davy's prejudice, and not wishing to offend by word or look, when he chanced to observe the foundling's eyes fixed upon him with a look of the most eager interest. So Bowman, grown sensitive to every kindly look now, told of the struggles of his friend's early career. How he practised six or eight hours daily, of the great difficulty he had experienced in getting lessons, how he played in the orchestra of a dirty foreign music-hall, and lived on a crust that he might pay a teacher, how he had taught beginners, copied scores, corrected musical MSS., done every drudgery of his craft, that he might save enough to have a year's tuition with a great master. Bowman related too that now he received fabulous prices for tuition, and that pupils who offered themselves to him had to take courses with his assistants ere he would take them in hand. In short, the story of this man was the story of the supremely successful artist, who, having struggled hard for success, takes pride in sustaining and repeating it. To all of which little Davy listened with dilated eyes, his cheeks blazing, the mercurial blood of his race at boiling point with excitement. When it came to the story of the lessons he could contain no longer, but cried aloud to Hamilton:

"I tell 't ye! I tell 't ye!"

Hamilton nodded kindly at him, and Bowman, having the matter explained, volunteered to write to his friend and see if any special arrangement could be made for little Davy. Whereupon the foundling rushed to him, kissed his hands in a rapture, and fled

to the kitchen, where presently (by a process best known to themselves), he and Lizzie Lindsay had collected half the children of the Rows, and were soon engaged in playing an energetic game of forfeits, in which the chief penalty was to "tak' the poker in their hauns and cry 'Spunky' up the lum three times," this being supposed among the children to be a direct challenge to the Evil one to appear in *propria persona*, but his black majesty seemed always to be away from home when the Trailfit bairns challenged him, for he never responded.

One night Bowman, with Hamilton's connivance, planned to make a secret inspection of various brattices about which he had his doubts. For certain reasons he wished no one to know of this night tour, and he had asked David to arrange matters so that he might take the engine for part of the night—this had been easily done, and Bowman, having had the night shifts withdrawn from the workings he meant to visit, all was in readiness. It was a night of dense darkness, the summer was cold and wet, and there was a little fire lighted in the living room, before which, as the two men sat waiting for it to grow late, sat Marriotte holding her baby. Whooping cough was epidemic in the village, and every now and then the child's frame was racked by it. Marriotte gently "trotted" its tiny bare feet in time to a nonsense rhyme.

" 'Footicus ! Footicus ! When will ye gang ?'
 ' When the days turn short and the nights turn lang,
 Then I'll toddle and then I'll gang ! ' "

As she crooned this to her babe she bent broodingly over it, her face softened and irradiated with mother-love. And without the radiance of the little fire, David and Bowman sat, as she had been wont to sit apart at her tambouring. It seemed to the sore hearts of both men that she had something, whilst they had nothing, and the human in the hearts of both rose strong and cried aloud for this woman, who seemed, for the moment, to be oblivious of them, whilst she sang to her child's uncomprehending ears the jingles to which mothers' voices lend melody.

It was indeed a strange and wonderful thing for Marriotte to be able to pour out undisguisedly the whole riches of her heart upon this little creature, who made no demands for aught save what her bounty granted. Never before had Marriotte Hamilton dared proffer a caress or a loving word without fear of the train she might fire.

The two men, watching her in furtive silence, each felt a stirring of bitter hate towards the other. The ugly passions at work within them were evidenced upon their faces. Bowman's swarthy face was almost livid, the veins quivered upon Hamilton's brow.

Marriotte had now taken one of her baby's hands and patting it softly upon one of her own, was saying :

" Pet—er Dick,
Pet—er Dick,
Peter—Dick's—peat—stack "

with a seemingly illimitable enjoyment in the nonsensical repetition. Where had Marriotte learned these things? Who knows? Her own lullabies had been liquor-laden curses.

Presently her voice died to a droning hum, and at length ceased. She waited a moment, then gathering the baby high against her breast in a fashion she had, she rose softly. It seemed to the two watching that she had never looked so young, so lovely, so tall and straight—Hamilton sought for a comparison, but found none—to Bowman she seemed like an angel bearing a cherub. She seemed to become re-aware of their presence.

"She's asleep," she said in a half breathless, wholly wondering way (as if the slumber of this child was some strange phenomenon), then, not seeming in any way to distinguish one man from the other, not noticing their black brows, she turned to the door.

"Good-night," she said, in the same hushed tone.

Neither of the men spoke, but an Evil Spirit entered into Bowman; he got upon his feet and opened the door for her, looking full in her face the while, but Marriotte at the moment had no eyes for him, for she was gently pulling up the white shawl which enwrapped the child that the colder air of the passage might not blow upon it; ere Bowman stepped back from the door, or Marriotte had crossed the threshold, David stood beside them, a nasty sneer upon his countenance, a lighted candle in his hand.

"I will light you to your room," he said to Marriotte. She did not speak but went on, and he followed with the light, not before the Evil Spirit in Bowman recognized its familiar looking mockingly from Hamilton's eyes.

As the two vanished up the stairs, Bowman leaned against the wall shaken by a palsy of rage. Forgetting all reason in his wrath, he only remembered

that David had flouted him to his face, had asserted his husbandhood by going openly to the room where he, the man she loved, the father of her child, dare but go by stealth to plead without a closed door!

A wild impulse to follow Hamilton, to challenge him, to attack him then and there and fight for the possession of this woman, as stags fight for the lordship of a gentle hind, flooded his veins with fire. He listened, his hands closing and unclosing as though upon the throat of an enemy, till he caught a faint "Good-night," and heard David's footsteps come back to his own room.

Bowman went out into the garden, and the wet night winds slowly brought back reason to his brain, and he trembled, as with an ague, when he realized how nearly he had added fresh fear to Marriotte's already heavy burden.

Thus when David joined him at the time appointed for setting out, where he waited by the doorway, Bowman was calm with the Dead Sea placidity which follows tense excitement; upon the contrary David, whose passions so rarely slipped the leash, was yet in a state of tumult. The sense of such wrongs as his is cumulative too, and though he did not know it the unacknowledged memory of his losses and his sacrifices fed the flame of his anger as with oil.

The night was heavy—the streets wet underfoot, and the sky threatening above. The blast furnaces shone against the black curtain of the night like hieroglyphs of blood spelling disaster. The village was dark and silent, its sombre thatch seemed to cower beneath the angry sky. The two men proceeded silently. As they neared the pit, Bowman

paused as had been agreed; he heard Hamilton greet the man at the engine, and a moment after saw him go off gladly. He was whistling as he came out of the engine-house a gay Scotch strathspey, but even over his unimagined mind the sullen night had power, for his cheery whistle first slowed down to a mournful air, then died altogether.

Bowman went forward to the engine house; David was bending over with an oil can in his hand.

Bowman adjusted his miner's lamp.

"Are you ready?" he said, stepping on the lift.

"Yes," said David, putting out his hand to the lever which controlled the windlass.

There was a strange vibration in Hamilton's voice—it struck a chill to Bowman's heart—but the lift was already moving; as Bowman's head sank into the depths he caught a glimpse of Hamilton's face—it was white, drawn, convulsed by the throes of a devilish temptation, and Bowman sank into the Egyptian darkness of the shaft, knowing he had delivered himself into this man's hands—this man whom he had wronged. Bowman was no coward—but physical experiences impress themselves curiously upon the physical man—he remembered, with a shudder, certain grotesque shapes, loose and flabby as bags of chaff, which had been men before they fell to the bottom of a shaft in the Yorkshire mine, when the engine man had been taken with a fit so that his hand fell from the controller of the windlass.

Bowman noted that he was descending with extraordinary slowness—the thought of Marriotte came over him . . . out of the black darkness which confined him, shone forth her rose-red lips and shining

eyes—they had been his . . . Death's victory would be indeed barren, for it could not rob him of this recollection, and the memory was life itself. He sank upon his knees on the lift, and waited second by second for the swift rush and shock which meant death. . . . But if the man descending so slowly endured such thoughts, what of the poor devil beset by mortal temptation at the top—who knew that the life of his enemy was in the hollow of his hand? Power has temptations which impuissance cannot even comprehend. Those whom we only ban with scornful looks might be blasted had we but basilisk eyes. Shaken to its very foundations David's whole moral being strove as Laocoon strove in the coils of the serpents. Temptation, which is the subtlest artist of the soul, showed him in an instant every detail of what might be—it pressed upon him a sense of how the village envied his friendly intimacy with the manager, so that he would be the last to be suspected of—O, blood-red thought!—and Marriotte—would she not turn to his sheltering love and lay down her head, albeit wearily, upon his shoulder? All the good in David fought hard—and won—for his will was all unweakened by indulgence—he clung to the lever though it seemed to him that, finger by finger, some palpable demon strove to undo his clasp, and pull his hand away . . . but at length, after what seemed to him an eternity, he knew the lift was down. At the bottom, Bowman stepped off, and in three minutes was scoffing at himself, and telling himself that he had conjured up the look on David's face by aid of the flickering light which distorted everything—and as

he walked the long black galleries he reproached himself bitterly that he had doubted David, who had proved himself so far removed from the egotistical passions of other men; but David Hamilton at the top was sitting half-fainting, bathed in cold sweat, his hand cramped and paralyzed into the shape of the lever—feeling, in a very agony of abasement that he had done murder in his heart. Ever since the old days Evil Spirits have torn and rended men as they went out of them.

It was the grey of earliest morn when Hamilton and Bowman walked back to Farden Ha' together. A slow rain was falling; not the joyous rain of which leaves are born, but the untimely rain which rots the unborn bud in its calyx.

They held their way in silence, the heart of each chastened within him. There was no sound save the splash, splash, of their footsteps.

They entered the house together, and lit the candles which stood waiting, as the flame crept down the wick to the tallow and grew brighter the two men looked each other fairly in the face.

A strange impulse came to Bowman, he held out his hand, still looking at David, and David, ready to do any penance, took it.

"Good-night," they said—and parted.

That hand-clasp seemed to signify a mutual recognition of the difficulties of the position. It was at once confession and pardon, renunciation and promise. So they went their several ways to seek a brief sleep, and in a distant chamber Marriotte's tired heart rested awhile; she slept—dreaming of her child's father.

It is said that "only with Renunciation does Life, properly speaking, begin," if so, then these three entered into life together.

For the twain had renounced their sin, and the lonely man his vengeance.

When all is said and done and known, it is passing hard to judge between them. Nor is it for us to "curve the contumelious lip," at any of the three.

For, if between Hamilton and the woman, his wife, there was the solemn bond and pledge of matrimony, between Bowman and her there was the mystic tie of love.

If they dishonoured Hamilton's titular husbandhood he robbed them of the right and title to love each other, which would seem to have been their vested right ere ever their spirits drew from out the void to be shapened into a man and woman—made for each other under the laws of unescapable destiny, which it is hard to believe is not as sacred as any voluntary vow. If they maimed and defaced his life, he put metes and bounds upon a love created to be illimitable.

If the "Mute Beyond" is indeed just, surely, surely it holds some recompense for such as these?

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.

"Here could I hope . . .
That death did hide from human sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep."

THE wan wet weather still continued, making the year disastrously memorable to those who depended upon the fruits of the earth. It was rarely indeed that the gentle-eyed shepherd tending his flocks on the hill could discern the village thatch; one might not look athwart the Red Moor save in the face of a driving mist or a slow dropping rain; the streets of Trailfit were so swept by rain that their cobbles were livid, not black, and here and there, opposite the school-house, or by the pump, or at the corners of the public-houses, were shallow pools of water, which, devoid of any grassy marge, were peculiarly desolate-looking. In the meadows the grass was over long, over green.

The influence of these joyless, unhealthy days, permeated the long passages and gaunt rooms of Farden Ha', the shadows were never absent from the

corners, for the sun was neither radiant enough nor insistent enough to exorcise them. The trio who dwelt in this old house seemed to have absorbed and assimilated somewhat of the grey and spectral atmosphere which brooded in its dreary corridors. They began to feel inexpressibly apart from each other. Each feeling his way through a mist of half-comprehended intentions, and aims beclouded and confused. There comes a time in the life of every man and woman who loves, when the heart, having given its all, and spent with giving, asks through all its hollow chambers, "Is it worth while?" In the hearts of those who love truly, rehabilitation is swift, and the next drop of red blood that gathers is ready to be drained at Love's behest, for the moment, however, that Doubt endures, one realizes how much of Hell a human breast can harbour. It may be, that to these three, feeling their way blindfold along Life's difficult road, this doubt came—if so they bore it and gave no sign.

"Where is the sorrow but appears
In Love's long catalogue of tears?"

But as the livid pools caught and redoubled the image of the stray roseate clouds which sometimes hung above them, so, using Love's tears as a magic crystal, we may see therein, as by reflection, all the beauty of Life and Love.

Hamilton's face at this time was strong in the divinity of self-mastery and abnegation—Bowman's was graver even than his, and more spiritual; purity plucked from overthrow is more radiant than the placidity of negation, and much more difficult to

attain. The Devil never takes out letters-patent on a soul's destiny till the soul has plucked and eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, but then he fights hard for his own.

Upon Marriotte's brow there rested the chrism of hardly won and trembling peace, her lips were sealed with a sign of austerity that sat strangely upon their scarlet sweetness—her eyes were very meek, and had a dovelike expression, curiously enhanced by the slightly reddened lids, which spoke of secret tears. And the three faced the future as "those without hope."

Throughout the old house too at this time were heard weird and inexplicable noises, sharp cracks, and hollow reverberations, as if the woof and weft of human experiences so long aweaving within its walls were giving way. Its passages were filled with strange sighings, and from the old tower there came from time to time sounds like long-drawn moans. But to all these things Marriotte was deaf, for the baby's whooping-cough was worse, and she was beside herself with anxiety about it, though the elder matrons smiled at her fears. It was a popular belief among the village women that "a change of air" cured the whooping cough, and they were in the habit of making pilgrimages with their sick children down the pits, where they remained for a few hours, and came up confident of a cure. Indeed in several cases the remedy seemed to have done good, and Marriotte, who depended in all things relating to her child, upon the advice of Old Betty, determined to try the efficacy of the remedy, and take the baby down the pit upon the first fair day.

At last a sunshiny morning dawned—such a morning as makes the most miserable glad to be alive if only that he may see the sky. The sun, behind the veil of clouds it had worn so long, had gathered its midsummer strength, and now shone forth right royally—a sky-lord indeed.

As it chanced David was to go that day to the plantation of the Bog-end (beyond which was the Fairy Well), to “blaze” certain trees for the woodmen to cut for use at the mines.

“You’ll be going down the pit to-day, Marriotte?” he said.

“Yes,” she answered. “She gets worse instead of better.”

Hamilton bent over to look at the child in the hollow of her arm—as he looked the little face creased into a smile, and Hamilton’s heart melted within him. He stooped and touched its hand with his lips—the appeal which feebleness always makes to strength had gone home. A great affection for him had gushed up in Marriotte’s heart, surely he was a type of the great Elder Brother upon whom she was slowly learning to lean?

“David?” she said, and held up her face to him. He kissed her, and putting his great palm upon her cheek, pressed her head against his breast—she could hear the beating of his faithful heart.

“David,” she said again. There was much of eloquence in the one word, they both understood, and parted with hearts at peace with each other.

Marriotte, Hamilton, and Bowman left Farden Ha’ together. Marriotte was bare-headed, and carried her baby as all humble Scotch mothers do, in the

end of a shawl which enwrapped both. As they left the threshold a strange noise sounded behind them from the raftered living room; it was like the twang of a breaking harp string. As they stepped into the street they heard a babel of cries from the magpies, and looking up at the tower, paused, arrested by the strange spectacle, for every magpie was out of the ivy, the young birds, clumsy and awkward as yet with their wings, the *doyen* of the flock, an old magpie, almost white, and popularly supposed by the village to be blind, and the lusty birds of mature age which winged aggressively hither and thither, as if to manifest their strength. And as the little party stood watching their strange antics the whole flock of birds seemed suddenly to be animated with a definite purpose—with raucous cries, and slowly-flapping wings, they departed from the tower of Farden Ha', and led by the wary-winged old one, took a diagonal course across the village, making apparently for the wood beyond which were the turrets of Casseles House.

"Did ever you see the like of that?" said David. "That's a flitting with a vengeance! Marriotte, you've lost half your dignities! Farden Ha' without its magpies is not worth calling a castle!"

They all laughed a little. The benison of the sunshiny day seemed to rest upon their troubled hearts.

As they passed along the street they encountered the village women out watching the distant flight of magpies, and speculating noisily upon the import of this extraordinary manifestation.

"Div' ye mind the nicht the manager cam' tae

Trailfit, and hoo the pyots pit theirsels aboot tae gie him welcome?" asked Jean Lindsay.

"Ye've changed yer tune maist oncommon since then," said her father-in-law, who had crept out to sun his rheumatic bones; "I mind weel that nicht ye harped 'twis a warnin'—it turns oot noo tae hae been a welcome! Man! Ye're a very Miriam for prophesyin'!! Well, 'Time tries a'!' " But if yon wis a welcome this is a fareweel, I'm thinkin', for I never saw burds haud sae thegither except when the rookery at the gates o' Cowrie Doon shifted quarters tae the Bog-end planting, and the very next day the big Norroway pine, whaur their auld nests had been, fell doon, and showed it wis rotten through and through, though naebody but the burds had jaloused it afore."

"They're no canny, thae burds," said Mrs. Jamphraes decidedly. "For ma pairt I wad be glad if I never saw a feather o' them again! But," looking speculatively at the old tower, "it gies the auld tooter a maist wonderfu' deserted-like look the want o' them."

At the sharp turn of the street the trio from Farden Ha' parted, Bowman and Marriotte going towards the pit and Hamilton holding on his way to the plantation. He had gone but a few steps when he paused, and called to Bowman:

"Marriotte's never been down the pit before. If the lift makes her giddy——"

"I'll take care of her," said Bowman, feeling with a glad uplifting of the heart that he could look Hamilton in the face and name Marriotte's name now.

Hamilton turned away again, but was once more arrested, this time by Marriotte's voice.

"David," she cried. He looked back. She had loosened the shawl and was waving the child's hand to him in farewell. It glistened white like a nodding lily in the sun, the mother's face, flushed with unaccustomed rose, smiled at him, a tress of her dark hair was blown loose across her brow—his heart drank in the sight—he waved his cap again and again, and then they turned their backs on each other and went their several ways.

Hamilton pursued his task among the trees industriously. Once finding himself near the far edge of the little wood he went to the margin, and looked forth to see the hills, for of late the contemplation of their impassive heights had given him comfort. Unchanged mid the mutations of the surrounding country (the aspect of which was scarred by pits, and distorted by black heaps of "waste"), surely they symbolled forth the eternal purposes of life, to which all accident of individual circumstance is indifferent. He gazed long upon them with very wistful eyes, till he saw a great shadow grow and darken upon their rugged steepes—he raised his eyes higher even than the hills, and saw, floating serenely above them, a radiant silver cloud. Led, as if by a mighty hand, up a celestial stair from the hill to the sky, from the sky to its Maker, it came to Hamilton, that, as it was impossible to guess at the shape of the silvery cloud from the dark distorted shadow it cast upon the hill, so it was impossible to guess at the purposes of God from the vague struggles of humanity against them—but even as the white cloud hung

above the bleak hillside, so Hamilton believed that some tender purpose of Good lay behind all those things which he had accounted as Evil only.

He turned back thoughtfully, and completing the tale of trees, came to the edge of the plantation next Trailfit again, chancing to issue at that very point from whence the village was visible—where Bowman had seen the flutter of a drugget gown against the green a year before.

And as Hamilton stood there, he, and the shepherd on the hill, and Betty of the Knocken driving on her milk-cart, saw a great banner of thin blue flame burst high into the air from the downcast shaft of the Wester pit—and in a few seconds the earth trembled beneath them, and a dull roar came to them, and between the flame and the sound they saw the old tower of Farden Ha' dissolve and crumble to a heap before their eyes—then a great cloud of mingled smoke and dust obscured the view.

In an instant Betty's sturdy old arms had dislodged the heavy barrel of milk and sent it trundling into the road, then, with voice and rein, she urged the brown horse on; the shepherd left his flocks and fled down the hillside, his grey hair streaming, crying, unconsciously, aloud:

"Woe! Woe!!" like a mournful prophet, and David Hamilton, his face suddenly stricken with age and fear, was racing, as never man raced, to Trailfit.

The first soul he saw was little Davy—running like some distraught thing, with mouth agape and wild eyes.

"The mistress!" cried Hamilton, never pausing; "is she back?"

"No, no," Davy shrieked; "she's i' the pit!"

Hamilton went past him like a whirlwind.

All the village was at the pit mouth—as he passed the Troon cottage he saw old Mary Troon, who had been bedridden twenty years, standing like a spectre from the grave in the doorway, crying aloud with strange mouthings for her bairn—her bairn. It was a frightful scene of confusion, uncertainty, and fear. Every woman and child in Trailfit pressed about the shaft. At the outskirts of the village could be seen groups of black-faced men hurrying in from the other pits. Tam Jamphraes was already mounted on Bowman's horse and riding between life and death to Yondertown for the doctor of the mines. David rushed through the throng to his engine; it was practically uninjured, a few planks only having been blown off the engine house by the first outward blast, he called frantically for volunteers, and men, grown ghastly beneath the grime, stepped promptly forward, whilst their wives clung to them, holding them back, and other women besought them in God's name to go. . . .

Two hundred and fifty men and boys were in those death-charged depths, and one woman and a young child. The repairing team from The Clachan pit came hurrying up, and set to work upon the air-fan, which had been badly damaged. Expresses from Yondertown came, and the men wrought as only men can when urged on by such extremity as called to them from every side. Yet it was five hours before the first cage full of rescuers went down—to be brought up insensible and nearly asphyxiated—for the deadly after-damp had full possession

below, and no human mouth might breathe of it and live.

When Hamilton came to himself it was midnight. A midnight of terrible lamentation; Old Betty and little Davy were working over him, and the mine doctor was forcing brandy down his throat.

A mine inspector had arrived, and he had forbidden any further attempt at rescue till the air-fan was working. Hamilton got dizzily to his feet, and, followed afar by little Davy, went to Farden Ha'. Thought had become all feeling, all feeling—pain. The fantastic house in which he had endured so much lay a heap of ruins—the tower was down—upon the threshold, where Bowman and he had clasped hands for the first time, lay the great stone with the stain as of blood upon it, sticking from between two stones he saw the bruised and broken flower-heads of Marriotte's scarlet geranium. Looking upon this desolation a strange uncertainty came to David. One of the out-reaching galleries of the pit had been carried below Farden Ha', Marriotte had often spoken of it, and as often said she would like to stand below where she dwelt, and it came over David with the irrefutable strength of conviction that it was there he would find her, might she be safe? He looked about and groaned aloud—and trod gently as if upon a grave.

He resolved that come what would he would reach the end of that working if he could keep life in himself so long. And as he took thought of this there came to him a memory of earthly obligations. He recalled no debt of love or honour or money that he had left unpaid.

There was only little Davy. He called to the boy, who lingered miserably near, his fiddle under his arm. From his pocket where he had always carried it Hamilton took out the address Bowman had given him before he left for England, with the pencil with which he had noted down the trees Hamilton wrote across it the name of the London musician; he drew out too a little canvas bag in which there were a few guineas, a pitiful provision Hamilton's foresight had been making against a day of need, and giving the paper and the lean wallet to little Davy, Hamilton said to him:

"Take this, and you'll find your way to the man you want, and he'll teach you, Davy, I'm sure of that, for the sake of his friend. And here's all the money I have. It's no much, but it'll take you to England, and you'll tell the music man when and where ye got it, and if ye need tae work for yer music it'll dae ye nae hairm, I'm no sure that I've din a' by ye that I nicht hae din, but a sair hert's selfish, and mine's been gey sair whiles. Ye're tae leeve a decent honest life, Davy, and if ever ye love a woman mind ye dinna ower-persuade her, but if she loves you, then ye'll be the blessedest o' mortals—and, Davy—if ever ye're called on tae judge anither man, search yer ain hert weel afore ye judge him; there's a maist wonderfu' resemblance 'tween gude and bad, and it's no aye easy tae tell which is which, and I think noo it's mair a happen than anything else that maks ane clean and the ither spotted. I'm gaun doon the pit . . . And I'll no' be back. . . . Ye'll wait three days, and then ye'll tak' yer fiddle and awa' tae England. And, Davy, mind this! Yer

faither, wha'ever he wis, wisna a beggar. For he wis fair sterved wi' hunger, and the banes maist through the skin o' him—throughoot a' braid Scotland there's bite and sup for them that begs—but *he didna*, and dinna you be a beggar, Davy—and noo—Fare ye weel——” Some other words David said as the boy clung to him—whether prayer or blessing the boy could never tell.

Davy begged to go down the pit with him, this Hamilton absolutely forbade—nevertheless, that day little Davy was brought up senseless out of one of the passages, having smuggled himself on to the lift to follow Hamilton.

Known throughout all the earth by a fine-sounding foreign name, little Davy holds the musical world captive. The greatest of all the famous Roche's triumphs is to have been his master, the world wonders at the austerity of the young musician's life amid the temptations his transcendent success brings him, but he cherishes in his heart a love “passing the love of women,” for a man long dead, and his memory makes little Davy keep his laurels all unsmirched.

As Hamilton passed through the throngs again to the pit he heard that old Bowman was expected from England—what a greeting he would have from these distraught women who, like all miners' women so situated, would consider him as the direct cause of their bereavement! As Hamilton drew near the pit-mouth he heard a voice which had once before comforted him in sore extremity—Haggis Sandy was standing, his face grave; his hand upraised, saying to

the kneeling women and children the sermon which The Minister had preached at the time of the other explosion, standing beside Sandy was the parish minister, the tears running over his face. Mrs. Jamphraes and Bell Telpher knelt clasping each other's hands and Barbara Pillans (her husband and three sons in the pit), rocked back and forth, and the old drunken mendicant, his face working, was saying: "Let not your hearts be troubled . . . In my father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you . . . I will not leave you comfortless" . . . With those words in his ears Hamilton took his place, the first man in the cage, crowded by young Tam Jamphraes, his boyish face grimly determined as he went to look for his father.

Old Betty watched David take his place in the cage with wistful eyes—she knew that thus her vision, seen in the sunny kitchen, was fulfilled. There was no rebellion in Old Betty's heart—but a reverent and pitiful wonder that the young fresh branches should be broken whilst the withered boughs were left to bear the breath of yet other tempests—and Old Betty after this added another petition to her prayers, "Lord dinna forget me."

Hamilton gave a look up at the sky—and then they were going down.

The Inspector had instructed the rescuers to keep together that they might be of mutual aid in danger, for there was yet much to fear from the after-damp. The main anxiety of the hour lay in a direction remote from the gallery which ran below Farden Ha'. It was not long before the rescuers missed David. It was remembered how completely he had been overcome

by the gas in the first mad attempt at rescue, and two went back to look for him, they did not find him, and retraced their steps to meet their comrades staggering back with horrible burdens—burdens for which the women at the top waited.

Meanwhile Hamilton, following his intuitions, pursued the gallery which led beneath the ruined heaps of Farden Ha'.

From time to time he passed bundles of flesh and clothes—he stopped only to be sure there was no breath in these poor masses, then went on, his heart sickening within him—the force of the explosion here must have been terrific; his labouring lungs were almost bursting, his head reeling, but he held on his way; he had brought a pick-axe with him, and he found he needed it many times, for doors were torn off, props down, there were falls from the roof to be surmounted, but he fought his way forward; the rescuers had been equipped with whiskey flasks—he swallowed some of the raw spirit and faced the task again. Each step had become an agony—each yard a battle royal. He came upon two men lying together, their positions were natural, their features calm and undisfigured. It was Jamphraes and young Lindsay.

Hamilton saw that after-damp had killed them, not the explosion proper, and so low had this poor man been brought, so humble his hopes, that he prayed as he had never prayed before that Marriotte, his poor pretty Marriotte, might have died thus, not as . . . but he dared not think of it . . . he began to have strange fancies, ever before him in the gloom of the dusky tunnel he seemed to see a

baby's hand waving at him, a hand like a lily nodding in the sun, and beyond that again, dark eyes and smiling lips, rose-red cheeks and wind-blown hair beckoned to him. . . . He was coming near the end of the gallery, the spot which Bowman had said was directly under the threshold of Farden Ha'—that threshold upon which, as Bowman crossed it for the first time, he had shuddered as one does when a foot treads upon his grave—and here—as if in fulfilment of that eerie presage Hamilton found what he sought. He had known from the first that hope was vain, yet the certainty blinded him for an instant.

He let fall his pick-axe, and half-stooping, involuntarily, to get it, got a full breath of deadly after-damp. He did not realize that in this chamber of death it had risen waist high . . . He compelled himself now to look upon what was before him.

The figures were seated, and the woman's head was upon the man's breast, her face upraised to his, which yearned above her, his arm was round her and one of hers was about his neck, touching it with the timid caress he had so loved in life. In the circle of their other arms the child was clasped. Hamilton turned the light upon their faces and then, for the first time, his faith, which had brought him through so many perilous places, wavered. He had looked to see upon these dead countenances some recognition of error, some sublime penitence, some evidence of eternal regret, some mute but legible confession, perhaps some hint of a sense of the wrong which had been done him.

Instead there was upon these frozen lips the solemn signet of great joy. A supernal gladness shone on

these dead faces which even the pallor of Death could not dim. In whatever aspect Death had appeared to them it had been less terrifying to them than Life.

The dear delight of dying together had blotted out all bitter memories, and wiped away all tears from out their eyes.

Hand in hand they had gone forward, gladly, into the dark.

There grew upon David Hamilton a sense of eternal isolation which fought against the sorely-tried Faith which had brought him thus far safely upon his difficult way. That one strangling moment of Doubt was the supreme tragedy of his life—it was but a moment, then victory came to him as it did to One who said, "*Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine.*"

David Hamilton fell upon his knees—he was fully enveloped in the choking after-damp, but he did not know, for all his superficial pit-lore was forgotten, and he knelt down with no more thought than if he had been on a heather brae with the clean breath of Heaven blowing about him.

Just as he knelt a muffled thunderous roar sounded faintly from the passage whence he had come, but he did not hear it, it mattered nothing now that a thousand tons of roof had fallen to block the way back, for David Hamilton's way lay otherwheres.

The flame of his lamp burned dimly, through its wavering radiance he looked long at the two joyous faces which made of Death a feast, kneeling thus before them he was as a mendicant craving some crumb of the banquet of life from which he had been shut out, but upon their faces was no mercy; he saw

this, but his moment of Doubt was gone. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," he said, and, swaying, fell forward with his face on Marriotte's feet—the light flickered and died, and thus with those two others David Hamilton awaits the Judgment.

THE END.

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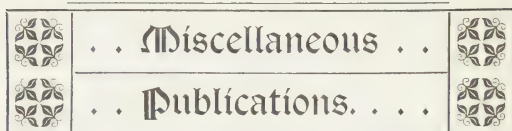
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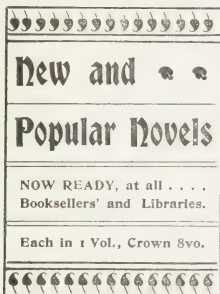
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